

New measures for small businesses that celebrate October as Small Business Month



**Honorable Rechie Valdez
Minister of Small Business**

(Montreal) Monday, Oct 21/24 The Office of the Honorable Minister for Small Business, Rechie Valdez, requested the North American Filipino Star for an interview regarding the new measures adopted to help small businesses across Canada via Microsoft Teams. Zenaida Ferry-Kharroubi, its chief editor and publisher gladly agreed as she recognizes the importance of small businesses.

According to the most recent statistics report released in February 2024 which considered a small

business from the establishment level that employs from 1 to 499 people between 2021 and 2022, total employment in the private sector increased by approximately 802,550 jobs. Small businesses account for 41.5% of this total.

The following interview questions are focused on providing insights into the role of small businesses and the best practices that one can gain from running a small business. Minister Valdez has a very impressive record of accomplishments which will certainly be difficult to emulate but will promote the status of immigrants from the Philippines and their contributions to Canadian society. She wants to relay some good news for small businesses across Canada:

ZFK As your office has indicated, you would like to have a personal interview about the new measures for small businesses. Please give your introductory message regarding the purpose of this interview.

MRV: Thank you so much, Zenaida, for your time. As an entrepreneur myself and Minister of Small Business, it is specially to greet entrepreneurs Happy Small Business Week. I would like to take the time to speak with them to share that it is our priority to help entrepreneurs across Canada succeed. With the lowering of

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up to 27%

Starting October 19

taxes for small businesses and the rate of inflation now down to 1.6%, we are still reducing costs for entrepreneurs. The first one is we negotiated with Visa and Mastercard to lower interchange fees up to 27%. This change affects

80% of all businesses across the country and will save them almost a billion dollars over five years. That is real money and real savings for small

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Who will Americans vote for - Trump or Harris?



VP Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump. Photos by Angela Major/WPR

The US election campaign is in its final weeks with voters heading to the polls on November 5 to elect the next president. With less than two weeks to go, polling averages show

that the two main presidential candidates, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, are in effect tied in most crucial

See Page 2 Trump or Harris?

Voter turn out a real concern in School Board elections



(By Z.F. Kharroubi, October 24, 2024) Voting day for the chairs and elected commissioners of the nine English school boards in Quebec is November 3, 2024 while advance voting is October 27. CTV news

reported that on October 15, 2024, the last day to check if one is on the voters list, there was a long line up of people in front of the EMSB building on Fielding Avenue in Montreal. Many

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Alvin Thomas D. Veloso

The first contingent of five PME Fathers, "Pretrés des Missions Etrangères du Québec" arrived in 1937, and briefly stayed with the Jesuits. They learned meanwhile, the Bisayan dialect before panning out to the East Coast for orientation and helped to manage some parishes prior to the Jesuits return to Zamboanga in 1939. Father Clovis Thibault, P.M.E, the leader of the group, was named parish priest of San Pedro. He later became an administrator of the Davao Prelature Nullius, and was subsequently promoted a bishop, then an archbishop with the elevation of the Davao Prelature into a Diocese and eventually into an Archdiocese. They played a significant role in establishing new parishes, in the ordination to the

From Page 1 Trump or Harris?

swing states.

To win, a candidate needs to secure 270 of the 538 electoral votes up for grabs. Electoral College votes are distributed across states according to their relative populations.

According to the latest news reports, early voting is already taking place in a number of states, including in battlegrounds such as North Carolina and Georgia.

With less than three weeks to go until the election, Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and Republican former President Donald Trump are battling it out to sway undecided voters.

According to FiveThirtyEight's daily election poll tracker, as of Wednesday, Vice President Harris is leading in the national polls and has a 1.8-percentage-point lead over former President Trump.

Separately, a new poll from the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) released on Wednesday showed that Trump is leading Harris by 2 percent nationally, with 47 percent to her 45 percent. This contrasts with Harris's 2-point lead in the WSJ's August survey. Both margins are within the polls' margins of error, suggesting that either candidate could be in the lead. Most polls to date have shown Harris ahead in the national vote, with the two candidates neck-and-neck in swing states.

While national surveys provide valuable insights into voter sentiment, the Electoral College will determine the ultimate winner, not the nationwide popular vote. Most states lean heavily, or very clearly, towards Republicans or Democrats.

What are the polls saying

A Brief Chronicle of the Golden Years of the PME Legacy in Davao

priesthood of a sizeable number of seminarians who served the growing population of settlers, mostly from Luzon, Visayas and from other areas of the country.

In the span of 3 years, they established two formative Houses of Study: the St. Francis Xavier Seminary College in 1961, and the St. Francis Xavier Major Regional Seminary in 1964 to train local clergies and prepare them for future leadership.

Some of the graduates rose to prominence like Father Frank Alvarez, P.M.E. who replaced Father Carmelo Gosioco, the founder of Notre Dame de Philippines Catholic Mission. Reportedly, the late Father Roberto Ruben Elago, M.S.P. who succeeded Father Alvarez, P.M.E. had also studied at the Saint Francis Xavier Seminary.

The surge of diocesan priests, the presence of some religious organizations of men and women and a sense of "fait accompli," had helped the PME Fathers to bid "adieu, "salamat" to the Catholic devotees of Davao; thankful for the opportunity to work together for the Greater Glory of God (Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam).

about the swing states?

The seven swing states are Pennsylvania (19 electoral votes), North Carolina (16), Georgia (16), Michigan (15), Arizona (11), Wisconsin (10) and Nevada (6). Together, they account for 93 Electoral College votes.

But FiveThirtyEight's average of recent surveys places Harris and Trump within the margin of error of polls in each of these seven states. Currently, in these swing seven states, Harris has a razor-thin lead in Nevada and Wisconsin and a slightly larger lead in Michigan, which has increased from a narrow 0.2 percent to 0.7 percent. Trump has a lead of more than 1.5 percent in Arizona and Georgia, with North Carolina and Pennsylvania also showing very narrow margins in his favour.

If the razor-thin margins captured by the poll averages hold on election night, Trump is favoured to win. But even the tiniest swing away from him in these key states — or an underestimation of Harris's support in the polls — could lead to a win for the vice president.

In the 2020 presidential election, Georgia — where Trump is currently leading — flipped from Republican red to Democratic blue after nearly three decades of voting Republican, and in Arizona — where Trump is also ahead — the Democrats won by a narrow margin of 0.3 percentage points.

How trustworthy are polls?

Election polls predict how the population might vote by surveying a sample of voters. Surveys are most commonly conducted by phone or online. In some cases, it is via post or in person.

Poll trackers, which aggregate



Davao Bishops Medil S. Aseol of Tagum, Guillermo V. Afable of Digos, Abel C. Apigo of Mati posing with some Notre Dame des Philippines Parishioners

Last June 18-22, 2024, at the behest of the current Archbishop of Davao, Romulo G. Valles, D.D., Bishops Abel Apigo of Mati, Guillermo Apable of Digos and Medil Aseo of Tagum visited Montreal, Quebec to pay their respect and express the gratitude of the Davao Catholic community. They, likewise, thanked the Augustinians and the Jesuits, for their pioneering efforts in Christianizing Southern Mindanao.

Needles to say, the PME departure from Davao was a gain for Notre Dame des Philippines

community. A "grand merci" to Fathers Jean-Paul Asselin, Gerard Loiselle, Roger Begin, Andre Gagne, Francois Brunelle, Richard Brodeur, Jean-Yves Isabel, Jacques Bourdages and others, for their help and support. (Alvin Thomas D. Veloso, M. Ed. degree holder, past president FAMAS, 71-72, Federation (FFCAQ) 1981-1984; Philippine Folk Art Society, 1992-2002; KDT-1998. Educator for 53 years: Canada, USA, Manila, Philippines; Retired in 2018.)



Paula Deen and Lara Trump are old pals, but the celebrity chef recently posed for a photo with the former president, as well. (Deadline news)

a number of polls together, are weighted based on a number of factors, such as the sample size of the poll, the pollster quality, how recently the poll was conducted and the particular methodologies employed.



Taylor Swift endorses Kamala Harris

According to a Pew Research Center study, confidence in public opinion polling has been undermined by inaccuracies in 2016 and 2020. In both general elections, many polls failed to accurately capture the support for Republican candidates, including Trump.

Pollsters got it wrong again in the 2022 midterm elections. Only this time, they undercounted the support

for Democrats and predicted a win for Republicans, only to be proven wrong. (Excerpts from Al Jazeera news report dated October 24, 2024)

Trump and Harris have celebrity endorsements but Harris appear to have a longer list of celebrities supporting her. How much difference will this make in the final result of the elections?

Trump's endorsements are from billionaire Elon Musk, Kid Rock, Hulk Hogan, John Daly and Rosanne Barr to name a few.

Kamala Harris endorsements include Oprah Winfrey, Taylor Swift, billionaire Marc Cuban, Barbara Streisand, the Obamas, and even Republicans like Liz Cheney and former congressman Fred Upton.



FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

The importance of voting during elections

Zenaida Ferry Kharroubi

Has anybody wondered how things that affect us directly in our daily life could change for the better if only we knew who to vote for in elections held periodically in all levels of government? Did we ever try to find out if all promises made by political candidates ever materialized? If we haven't done anything to see how we can affect changes we need to make our lives better, now is the best time to do so as there are elections in different levels of government - school board elections next month as well as municipal, federal and provincial elections to be held in 2025. Needless to say, if we want to vote wisely, we must be well informed about the different problems and challenges that require immediate solutions which can only be achieved by electing political leaders who are truly committed to serve the people.

How do we learn about the important issues of the day? If we are

interested to learn about them, there are countless ways especially now that we have many technological tools at our disposal. Even though we may have no background in psychology, we can still use our common sense in evaluating the character of people by the way they talk about themselves and how much they believe in what they can do. It is a common tendency to elect those who have served in different non-profit organizations as well as in some government positions which provided them with some ideas of working for the public. But we can also pay attention to those who are so called "unsung heroes" who work unselfishly, doing something that helps others in other simple ways. Perhaps, they can also be given a chance to run for public office if they can be convinced to do so.

Briefly speaking, democracy thrives in any country where there is freedom of the press and an active, well-informed citizenship.#

Five things about Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante, who won't seek re-election in 2025



Montreal mayor Valerie Plante greets her party colleagues after announcement she will not run for a third term in next year's municipal elections, Wednesday, October 23, 2024 (The Canadian Press, Christinne Muschi)

Sidhartha Banerjee The Canadian Press

Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante says she will quit municipal politics after serving the final year of her second term, which comes to an end in November 2025.

Known for her trademark laugh and positive energy, here are five things about the municipal politician first elected as a city councillor in 2013.

Montreal's first elected female mayor

The City of Montreal's 45th mayor was the first woman elected to the job, in 2017. During the preceding election campaign, Plante wasn't well-known to voters as she locked horns with Denis Coderre, a former Liberal cabinet minister, who had been the city's bombastic incumbent mayor since 2013. A campaign poster depicting a smiling Plante adorned with the slogan "l'homme de la situation" (the right man for the job) caught everyone's attention. Before upsetting Coderre in 2017, she defeated former Parti Québécois cabinet minister and ex-Montreal mayoral candidate Louise Harel to win a council seat in 2013.

Speaking out against online abuse

Plante came under fire this year for having limited the comments on her social media accounts, but defended the decision, saying she had received a torrent of abuse for months. A civil rights groups and the Opposition at city hall criticized the decision, saying it limited freedom of expression, but Plante disagreed.

She said some may think women in politics are required to accept vulgar, threatening and often violent abuse online; however, she said she thought otherwise.

A Montreal vision

Greener, bike-friendly, climate-resilient — under Plante's administration, the city's green spaces have expanded. As well, she has championed so-called "sponge parks," often made of rocks or soil, which capture rainfall and reduce flooding. The city has 1,065 kilometres of bike lanes, including the express bike network, available year-round.

But there has been criticism

about the propensity for bike infrastructure and seemingly endless construction, notably in downtown Montreal. A proposed "Pink Line" for Montreal's metro — a 29-station link between the west and the north of the city — never materialized despite being one of her key election promises.

Plante said she will spend her final year pushing to adopt "one of the major legacies of my administration": the city's urban planning and mobility plan unveiled in June 2024, which sets out what the city will look like in the next quarter century.

A new leader for Projet Montreal

Plante won the mayoralty in 2017, and in 2021 she increased her share of the popular vote. She is the second full-time leader of the municipal party, taking over in 2016 from its founder, Richard Bergeron, who led the party through elections in 2005, 2009 and 2013.

Plante's departure means the party will now elect a third leader. During her speech, she noted that "it (the party) existed before me and it will continue to evolve.

In fact, that's why Montrealers chose us twice. They know who we are and what we stand for."

Plante is an author She published a pair of graphic novels with illustrator Delphie Côté-Lacroix. In 2020, she published a graphic novel "Okay, Universe: Chronicles of a woman in politics" that tells the story of Simone Simoneau — modelled on Plante — a young community organizer who decides to take the plunge into politics by running for a seat on city council.

The second book, "Comme des renardes," published in March 2024, is about whether Simoneau would run for the leadership of her party — mimicking her own foray into the municipal political world. In an interview with The Canadian Press, Plante said she had toyed with the idea of publishing a book after she won the mayoralty in 2017. Writing a typical political autobiography didn't appeal to her, she said.

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The opinions expressed by the writers and columnists do not necessarily reflect that of the management of the North American Filipino Star nor its editors.

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businesses. And for small businesses in eight provinces outside of Quebec where the carbon pricing scheme rebate still exists, we will return 2.5 billion dollars of carbon rebate to approximately 600,000 small businesses to help them in these challenging times.

ZFK: Since your election as an MP in 2021, and your appointment as Minister of Small Business in 2023, what are the most important lessons you have learned that you can share with other small business owners?

MRV: It is very valuable, as a former small business entrepreneur, to bring that perspective to Ottawa and to the Cabinet people, advocating to meet the needs of small businesses. I have 15 years of corporate banking that worked for me, and then I had the chance of baking my daughter's first birthday cake and I never thought that experience would inspire me to discover my inner passion. I just would like to have a shoutout to Montreal because Montreal was the first place I came when I was on maternity leave, I decided that since I love baking, to take a trip to different places and decided that I would like to do the same thing in Toronto and registered my business. So, I have acquired the experience, while running a business, working full time, and taking care of two kids – that hustle, the real mindset that an entrepreneur has. That is the perspective that I bring in Ottawa - I'm happy that there are various ways we're supporting small businesses across the country.

ZFK: From your own experience, what do you consider as the key to your success?

MRV: I appreciated the journey that I've been in – starting with baking, becoming an entrepreneur and really discovering what it means. Everything that I learned has taught me to have a lot of patience, to enjoy life in such a very different way. I think most perspectives are really important, specially from the representation standpoint because the Filipinos in

Canada are now 1.5 million strong and I get to bring up their voices and experiences in what I do. I think just being perfectly who I am, I actually truly believe that being Filipino is my superpower. I bring this perspective to



Minister Rechie Valdez (4th from the right) visited Cuisine de Manille, a Filipino-owned restaurant located on Victoria Ave. The owners and their staff pose with the Minister and Darlington Councilor Stephanie Valenzuela.

every decision that I make from the representation perspective of helping small businesses and truly supporting Canadians specially those who are under represented.

ZFK: What do you perceive as the future of small businesses in Canada?

MRV: The future of small businesses is bright. What I can say is that small businesses have had their challenges and will continue to have challenges. We had the backs of small businesses go through the most difficult time through the pandemic. We were there to support them, to keep their lights on, to keep their doors open. We've supported small businesses by reducing taxes for small businesses from 10.5% to 9%, reduced interchange fees for small businesses, and inflation rate is going down, and delivering the Canada Carbon Rebate for Small Businesses. Small businesses have challenges but we'll continue to be there and support them along the way. According to surveys we have received, small businesses are starting to have their confidence back again and we're looking forward

In 2023, Quebec Superior Court struck down parts of Bill 40, allowing English school boards to continue operating.

The Quebec English School Boards Association launched last September an awareness campaign to highlight that the only people who can't vote are those with children in French schools. Everyone else, including those who don't have children, can vote.

Voters will cast two ballots for the Chair of their local school board and a commissioner to represent them. There are 95 commissioners and 9 chair posts available across the province.

In Montreal, Katherine Korakakis is running against Joe Ortona to be chairperson of the EMSB.

School boards are regional organizations that oversee preschool, elementary, secondary, adult academic and vocational training for both youth and adults on their assigned territory.

to continue to grow their business, and they know that our government has their back - that's the kind of hope they really need. We'll continue to support and inspire entrepreneurs across Canada.

ZFK: What type of small businesses is mostly needed in the present economy?

MRV: In terms of businesses we need, we need all kinds of businesses – small, medium and everything in between. But in terms of what I see is the future of small businesses, I think because it is Small Business Month, what is vitally important is for Canadians to really take the time to support local businesses. So, supporting local businesses is not just not supporting local businesses individually but it is supporting their family, they're supporting their community, supporting Canada, all of us because small businesses make up 90% of this economy and actually employ millions of Canadians. So because it is the backbone of our economy, it is vitally important to support them. I encourage anyone who is looking to start a small business to go ahead and do so. I've done it, and if I can do it, anyone can do it.

ZFK: What is your message to the Filipino Canadian community in Montreal who are small business

entrepreneurs?

MRV: First of all, shout out to the Filipino community out in Montreal. I had the opportunity to visit the Filipino Association of Montreal, but also to visit the Filipino businesses on the main streets. I've met with them, and I've talked with them, and I can see how important their businesses are to them. I encourage all Canadians, especially Filipinos, to go ahead and not be afraid to take a risk. In some cases, I know you're sacrificing, you're multi-tasking - but go ahead and pursue your dreams. Our government is here to support you along that journey to start, grow, and scale your business. I just want to say that what we've done as a government, we've done more to build people-to-people ties with the Philippines, and in fact we've done more for the Filipino community than any previous government. Through our Indo-Pacific Strategy we've made sure we've made all of the opportunities available for small businesses to grow. That's through different trade agreements that we have, and ensuring that whether you are a Filipino business in Canada or back home in the Philippines, that importing and exporting is something that we continue to assist with. And actually, Filipinos can now travel visa-free and over 150,000 Filipinos have been able to take advantage of this. This is going to help strengthen the people-to-people ties between our two countries and we will continue to support that. Go ahead, pursue your dreams, and our government is going to be right with you along the way. My final message is: What a time to live. I did not have during my time as an entrepreneur, a Philippine Chamber of Commerce, and now we do. So even the community across Canada are mobilizing together all of the Filipino entrepreneurs. We're all here to help entrepreneurs grow, especially those from the Philippines.

We hope that our readers appreciate this interview that underscores the importance of small businesses in Canada.#

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individuals in line criticized the registration process, saying it was not conducive to voting. They explained that the earlier registration times were not convenient, leaving them no choice but to show up during the EMSB office's extended hours on Tuesday night.

Many people expressed concerns that a low registration turnout will be interpreted as a lack of interest by the CAQ government, which has previously attempted to eliminate English school board elections, citing insufficient interest as the reason.

The Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) tried to eliminate the elections and school boards all together with Bill 40. The last election doesn't have solid data as it was at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. But in 2014, turnout was under 17 per cent province-wide.



Central Quebec School Board on 2046 Chemin Saint-Louis, Québec, QC G1T 1P4

The nine English school boards are: Central Quebec School Board, Eastern Shores School Board, Eastern Townships School Board, English Montreal School Board, Lester B. Pearson School Board, New Frontiers

School Board, Riverside School Board, Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, and Western Quebec School Board.#

Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar's death has uncertain impact on the course of the war in Gaza

(Oct. 18, 2024) Families of hostages held captive in Gaza on Thursday welcomed the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar while urging the government to leverage his death to secure an immediate deal for



Yahya Sinwar, Hamas top leader (Reuters photo)



IDF soldiers carrying the corpse of the Hamas leader who was killed in a chance encounter, October 16, 2024 (BB News)

the release of their loved ones after over a year in captivity.

President Joe Biden said Thursday that the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar by Israeli troops is a "good day for the world," calling it an opportunity to free hostages held by the militant group and end the yearlong war in Gaza.

"Now's the time to move on. ... Move toward a cease-fire in Gaza, make sure that we move in a direction

that we're able to make things better for the whole world," Biden told reporters as he arrived in Berlin for a short visit. "It's time for this war to end and bring these hostages home. That's what we're ready to do."

The chance killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar on Wednesday represents "the beginning of the end" of the war in the Gaza Strip, claimed

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

It's not entirely clear what he meant by the bold statement, but then again, it hasn't been clear throughout the entire war how the IDF's remarkable tactical successes can lead to the end of Hamas rule in Gaza, the disarming of its terror army and the return of the hostages.

The elimination of Hamas's

most dominant figure could open a small window of opportunity to achieve Israel's elusive war aims, none of which have yet been secured. Senior US officials — including Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken — both indicated that they see a chance to end the war in the near future, and many world leaders echoed that sentiment.

One question, though, is how much of an influence Sinwar had on Hamas's operations at this stage. Gaza has been cut in two — or more — for most of the war, and Hamas cells have had to operate independently against IDF forces.

Still, seeing images of their leader lying amid the ruins of the territory he once ruled could demoralize those fighters still clinging to the desperate hope that he had a plan to get them out of the war alive and still in power. The lack of a rocket barrage in the wake of Sinwar's death points to a force that is not acting as a cohesive organization in any way. (Excerpts of news from various sources)

The October 7 demonstrations for justice amongst Palestinian and Israeli communities in Montreal

By Angela Lacuesta, Local Intern Journalist

On Monday, October 7, 2024, groups of students, supporters and protesters gathered to mark the anniversary of the war between Israel and Gaza. This day represents one year since the attacks of Hamas on the southern part of Israel which caused many people from the Gaza strip to be killed or held hostage. Around 42,000 Palestinians have been killed due to the war according to Gaza's Ministry of Health. To mark this day, Pro-Palestinian

The presence of police and security amidst the demonstrations were enhanced specifically on this day of the beginning of war. By Saturday, McGill had closed down their campus and moved classes online for the safety of staff and students in the university. It continued to be blocked off until October 13, 2024. One demonstration, a vigil, was done outside of McGill University at 12:30pm to acknowledge those who died or are being held hostage in the war. McGill students mainly organized



Pro-Israel demonstrators holding flags and posters of victims of the war on October 7, 2024, in Montreal (Angela Mackenzie- CTV News)

and Pro-Israel held vigils and protests to remember or raise awareness for their family, friends, loved ones and/or their communities who were affected by the war. This includes those being held captive, died, or are living amongst these conditions in war. Demonstrations were various areas in Montreal such as in front of McGill University, Concordia University and in Hampstead.

this vigil; however, alongside students, Montrealers came to commemorate the people affected in this war. They did this by laying wreaths, doing prayers and speeches, and holding flags and posters of those who were killed or held hostage. Before the protests, la Service de police de la Ville de Montreal (STM), the Sûreté de Quebec (SQ) and Concordia University Security



Pro-Palestine protestors near Concordia holding flags and chanting with the rest of the supporters on October 7, 2024, in Montreal (Angela Lacuesta- The North American Filipino Star)

were all posted near Concordia University to safeguard the area. At around 2pm, in Concordia, pro-Palestinian began a protest march showing their support for all those who were killed or captured by Israeli forces on Gaza and Lebanon.

The amount of police protection throughout the October 7 demonstrations has increased due to the significance of this day and the conflicts that arise from it. The protests had begun without issues; however, police intervention was needed at around 4:20pm when pro-Palestinian protesters threw paint, sprayed graffiti, and broke windows of a building under construction.

Mayor Valerie LaPlante expressed her concern due to the protest on social media saying, "We understand

people's desire to express their opinions, but we will not tolerate demonstrations turning into vandalism, destruction or acts of violence. SPVM officers will be on the ground today and all week to ensure that any tense situation that could escalate is defused. Montreal is a city of peace and we are counting on each person to act in accordance with the values of living together, empathy and solidarity that unite us." (Translated from French) She agrees with the idea of a peaceful protest of expression rather than violent actions to express feelings of discontentment. The group of protesters who caused physical disturbance to property dispersed after police had

See Page 18 October 7 protests



ONTARIO Community News

By Tony A. San Juan
OCT-Retired

Filipino Professionals Associations slate autumn convention

The United Filipino Professionals of Canada, Inc. (UFPCI), an Ontario-based organization of Filipino-Canadian professionals and practitioners will hold its 3rd Annual convention on October 26, 2024 (Saturday) from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. at Improve Canada, 7250 Keele Street, Vaughan, Ontario.

This year's convention theme is "Shaping the Future of Filipino Professionals in Canada". The event is organized by UFPCI in partnership with the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto and the University of the Philippines Alumni Association of Toronto (UPAAT).

The Convention, according to the event organizers, is "expected to facilitate further dialogue and collaboration in promoting the interests of Filipino professionals to allow them to contribute further to the development of the Province of Ontario, Canada in general and the Philippines as well."

Established on July 11, 2020, the Pinoy Professionals group was formed under the initiative of the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto with the support and encouragement of the then Philippine Consul General Orontes V. Castro. Initially, seven leaders of Filipino-Canadian

Professional organizations representing accountants, architects, construction professionals, engineers, nurses, physiotherapists, and teachers signed the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) in 2020. The MOC is intended "to facilitate collaboration and foster unity among the said organizations in promoting the interests of Filipino professionals in Ontario, particularly the recognition of their credentials."

The United Filipino Professionals of Canada, Inc. is composed of the Association of Filipino Canadian Accountants (AFCA); Association of Filipino Canadian Engineers (AFCE); Filipino Canadian Realtors Association (FILCREA); Filipino Construction Professionals of Ontario (FilConPro); Integrated Filipino Canadian Nurses Association (IFCNA); Peace Officers Living in Canada Integrated Association (POLICIA); Philippine Teachers Association of Canada (PTAC); Society of Physiotherapists with Foreign Credentials (SPFC); The Filipino Canadian Dental Hygienists' Society (FCDHS); and the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP), Ontario Canada Chapter.

Filipino Canadian educators hold fall conference

The summer is over and the autumn breeze is moving in the horizon. The September back-to-school jitters have passed and schoolwork is again on the agenda of students, parents, guardians, teachers, and administrators. Productive professional development & enrichment time is now de rigueur in the learning environment.

Aptly observing its established mandate, the Philippine Teachers Association of Canada (PTAC) will conduct its 18th Annual Teachers Conference on October 19, 2024, Saturday, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. via live stream Zoom.

This year's conference theme is "Continuing to Thrive as a Filipino-Canadian Educator". Invited as resource speakers are Andre O' Bonsawin, Indigenous Affairs Adviser of TCDSB who will speak on "Reconciliation in the Classroom" and Casiano Martinez, CPA, CGA who will provide "Tips on Personal and Business Taxes in Canada".

Organized in 2006, the

Philippine Teachers Association of Canada is a registered non-profit, volunteer-run socio-professional educators organization in Ontario. The Association comprises Filipino Canadians who are former educators in the Philippines or are certified and practising teachers in various Catholic, public and private educational institutions in the province.

The Association provides free professional services, seminars and assistance to registered members and other interested individuals in pre-teacher certification assessment guidance; teacher resume & cover letter writing; professional networking & referrals; teacher-interview clinic & preparation; and career planning & career alternative strategies. PTAC has continuing partnerships and linkages with professional, social and community-based organizations on specially developed initiatives and targeted projects. Membership in the Association is open to Filipino Canadians interested in teaching in Ontario.

Public forum on the Filipino diaspora in Canada set

The Philippine Consulate General in Toronto and Ontario's York University will jointly hold a public forum to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Canada on October 28, 2024 (Monday) from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm at the Tribute Communities Recital Hall and CIBC Lobby, eele Campus, York University, Toronto, Ontario.

The theme for the event is "The Filipino Diaspora in Canada: Celebrating Successes and Addressing Persistent Challenges". According to the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto announcement, the forum will feature a "panel of distinguished Filipino Canadians and trailblazers who will share their journeys towards professional leadership positions" in various fields such as government service, politics, the judiciary, and the academe. The discussion will also address "the role of family, community, education and mentorship in navigating career success" in the Canadian environment.

In addition to reflecting on their

successes, the panel members will also consider "what Filipino identity now means in the Canadian context, and the barriers and challenges still faced by the Filipino Canadian community." Those invited to speak are:

The Hon. Rechie Valdez, Member of Parliament and Minister for Small Business, Government of Canada

The Hon. Senator Flordeliz (Gigi) Osler, Senate of Canada, Canadian Senators Group, Manitoba

The Hon. Steve A. Coroza, Justice of the Court of Appeal for Ontario

President and Vice-Chancellor Ana Serrano, OCAD University, Toronto, Ontario.

Dr. Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay & Orillia, Ontario.

Interested individuals are requested to send in their RSVPs by registering at this link: go.yorku.ca/filipino-forum.

Monday, 28 October 2024
7:00 pm to 9:30 pm | Tribute Communities Recital Hall
112 Avenida del Este Building | Keele Campus | York University

The Filipino Diaspora in Canada: Celebrating Successes and Addressing Persistent Challenges

A public forum celebrating 75 years of
diplomatic relations between the
Philippines and Canada

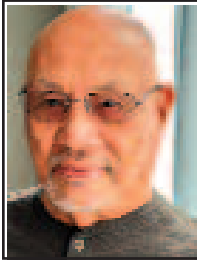


Invited Filipino-Canadian Leaders and Trailblazers:
Minister Rechie Valdez
Senator Flordeliz Osler
Justice Steve A. Coroza
President Ana Serrano, OCAD University
Dean Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, Lakehead University

Please register at bit.ly/38188g or via the QR code
by 20 October 2024



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Literary Corner

Pedro Guidote



Quotes from William Saroyan (Armenian-American novelist and playwright) (1908 - 1981)

If a man has not wept at the world's pain he is only half a man; there will always be pain in the world, knowing this does not mean that a man shall despair.

A good man will seek to take pain out of things.

*

Good people are good because they've come to wisdom through failure.

*

Remember that every man is a variation of yourself.

*

The role of art is to make a world which can be inhabited.

*

We are not forced into unpleasant activities.

We either allow them to come about or we encourage them to come about.

*

The whole world and every human being in it is everybody's business.

Philippines Food and Music Festival-Hamilton" by MyHip. at Gage Park, Hamilton, Ontario; 7) June 15 & 16 - "Tayo, An Immersive Filipino Cultural Experience", by KRE8 Corp. at Mel Lastman Square, North York Civic Centre; 8) June 17 - "Filipino Heritage Month Reception on Parliament Hill, by Members of Parliament at Sir John A. MacDonald, Ottawa with the theme "Kapit Bisig: Building Bridges Across Generations, Honoring Heritage and Stories"; 9) June 19 - "Dr. Jose Rizal Birth Anniversary: Wreath Laying", by Knights of Rizal Canada Region, at Earl Bales Park, North York; 10) June 22- "Wreath Laying at the Rizal Monument", by Markham Federation of Filipino Canadians, Markham; 11) June 29- "Filipino Heritage Month Celebration", by the National Filipino Heritage Canada, at Albert Campbell Square, Scarborough.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wrote in his post on X(formerly Twitter), "Mabuhay! Great to be back at the Taste of Manila in Toronto. The Filipino community in Canada is nearly 1 million strong, and our country is richer and more vibrant for it." Indeed, it was a summer of festivals replete with successful events and enjoyable experiences that reflect and recognize the proud traditions, values and practices of Filipino heritage, art, and culture in this adopted homeland.

Philippine officials launch "Love the Philippines and Bisita, Be my guest" travel program in Toronto

The Department of Tourism, the Department of Migrant Workers, and the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines, in partnership with the Tourism Promotion Board Philippines (TPBPHL) held their "Love the Philippines and Bisita, Be My Guest Program Campaign " event on August 23, 2024, at the Aria Ballroom of Four Seasons Hotel, Toronto, Ontario.

According to the Philippine Tourism Promotions Board, the LTP-BBMG Program is "an incentivized promotional campaign to encourage Overseas Filipinos and Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to invite their foreign relatives, friends and colleagues to visit the Philippines." Event attendees were allowed to win exciting prizes and enjoy incentives through a travel passport and privilege card that offer discounts and special offers at various destinations in the country.

The launching provided a "valuable opportunity to enhance the visibility of the Love the Philippines brand and engage the Filipino community as well as our partners and supporters in Canada in promoting our country as a tourism destination." During the presentation, Rica Bueno, Assistant Secretary of the Philippine Department of Tourism, asked, "for support in disseminating information on the LTP-BBMG Program to encourage participation in this important national initiative." Secretary Bueno with videos and slides, presided over the significance of the tourism drive and the status of the 3-year promotional program that includes Raffle Draws, Travel Passport, and Privilege Cards.

Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr, Philippine Vice President Sara Z. Duterte, Department of Migrant Workers Secretary Leo J. Cacadac, Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, and Philippine Ambassador to Canada Andrelita S. Austria gave video messages. Moreover, the Philippine Consul General in Toronto Angelica C. Escalona made live remarks and introductions.

In casual modern Filipiniana, more than 200 guests, dignitaries, and community leaders were shown videos of Philippine tourist destinations and cultural festivals and entertained with



live music and dance performances. Over dinner, they shared and enjoyed popular Filipino cuisines such as Adobo, Caldereta, Pinakbet, Pancit Canton, Lechon, Lumpia, Kinilaw, Kanin, Leche Flan, Buko Pandan, wine and drinks.

Indeed, the 3-hour Philippine travel-promotion gathering was a much-welcomed event and a highly interesting almost end-of-summer season activity in Canada. "Kaya mga kababayan, mga kaibigan, at mga kamag-anak, tara na sa Pilipinas. para

masayang puntahan, bisitahin at ipagsaya nating lahat ang yaman at kagandahan ng ating mahal na bansa!" (Tony A. San Juan, OCT).

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PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH

By Fely Rosales-Carino



Florence Sydney, RD, Dt.P

Let's give a warm greeting with open hearts to our Personality of the Month, Florence Sydney! The first Montreal-born personality, the world said hello to her on December 15, 1979, no doubt causing cheers to her Filipina mother Rose and Trinidadian father Maurice. She has a brother and a sister. Later, Florence gives her parents the ultimate tribute as she lists them as her role models. Why? She states that they taught her to be proud of her two cultures and to be open-minded and ambitious. But the two happiest moments in her life was when her sons were born. They are her pride and joy and the reason for getting up in the morning. They are her inspiration to be a better person everyday.

As we get to know her, we will discover that Florence Sydney's story is one of passion, resilience, and a profound connection to food, family, and culture. It all started in NDG, where she was born and raised. Rose and Maurice opened the first Filipino grocery store in Côte-des-Neiges in Quebec in 1985. So you can say that Florence's love of food began at an early age. Growing up surrounded by the smells, flavours and vibrant energy of the grocery store, she witnessed firsthand how food brought people together. Her parents' store wasn't just a place to buy ingredients; it was a community hub. People of all cultures, not just Filipinos, would shop there and exchange stories and become lifelong

friends. The delight she saw on customers' faces as they found familiar Filipino and other ethnic products was transformative. It was in those moments that Florence recognized the power of food to create connections and foster joy, igniting her lifelong passion for nutrition and the culinary arts.

Inspired by this, Florence pursued her education in Dietetics and Human Nutrition at the prestigious McGill University, where she graduated with honours (Honors in Dietetics and Human Nutrition). This achievement was a testament to her dedication in understanding how food impacts our bodies and our well-being. Combining her cultural background with academic expertise made her a sought-after voice in the field of nutrition.

In 2017, Florence's first cookbook, *3 ingrédients = 1 repas*, was published. This practical yet innovative approach to cooking immediately resonated with busy home cooks looking for simple, nutritious, and delicious meals. The cookbook became a bestseller, solidifying Florence's place in the culinary world. Her philosophy of creating flavourful dishes with minimal ingredients hit home for many, offering a fresh take on how to eat well without the complexity that often accompanies gourmet cooking.

Florence's influence grew beyond the printed page when she

launched her nationally broadcast cooking show, *Mixe-Moi Ça*, on ICI-television in 2020. The show quickly became one of the highest-rated French-language cooking programs on that station and it's not hard to see why. Her vibrant personality, deep knowledge of food and ability to effortlessly weave stories of her multi-cultural heritage into each episode have made her a beloved figure on the screen. Viewers are captivated by her ability to transform simple ingredients into extraordinary dishes, all while highlighting the importance of culture and tradition. With over 20 years of experience as a dietitian, she often shares nutrition tidbits with her audience to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Beyond her professional life, Florence is also a dedicated mother to two energetic and ambitious sons. Nolan, who attends College Notre-Dame, a French private high school, and Darius, who attends Dunrae Gardens Elementary, both share their mother's passion for food. Both boys are enrolled in Enriched English programs at their schools and are already developing their skills in the kitchen. Grocery shopping is a family affair for the Sydneys, where Nolan and Darius enjoy exploring new ingredients and coming up with their own culinary creations. Their favourite Filipino foods are lumpia, adobong manok, suman, and sweet turon. It's clear that Florence's love of food is not just a career but a way of life that she passes on to her children. How adorable is this – young lads who can cook and cook well! I say this is a rarity!

And did you know that

Florence has another talent in the world of dance? Aside from cooking, she LOVES dancing! She does all the Latin dances (salsa, merengue, bachata) and - get this - she also performs professionally as a samba dancer. If she dances as well as she cooks, well this is just beyond impressive. When you see her at parties, make sure somebody leads her to the dance floor. I think this would be egg-citing!

And wouldn't you like to know her motto? It's this: "You either win or you learn. I don't believe in the concept of failure. My other motto is: Be kind. It's a very simple way to live but it's the best." You're certainly not a sourdough; you're simply the zest. And you're one in a melon! (I couldn't resist).

Florence Sydney's journey, from growing up in her parents' Filipino grocery store to becoming a celebrated dietitian, chef and television personality, reflects her deep-rooted love for food, culture, and community. Through her work, she continues to honor her heritage while inspiring people across Canada to embrace the beauty of cooking. Her contributions to both the culinary and cultural landscape make her an outstanding Filipino personality to celebrate this month. Florence, you would be intimidating to invite for dinner, but the Filipino community salutes you. We are filled with gratitude that you shared your story, which will go on 'thyme after thyme.' Kudos to the chef and a big serving of blessings from heaven above!

FILIPINO COMMUNITY EVENTS 2024		
DATE	EVENT	ORGANIZATION
OCT. 19	CORONATION BB MARIA CLARA 2024 ST. KEVIN'S CHURCH 6 PM \$40	KNIGHTS OF RIZAL 514-297-4365
OCT. 20	ZUMBA & VARIETY SHOW NOTRE DAME DES NEIGES CHURCH 6 PM FREE	AFACD 514-963-7512
NOV. 2	HALLOWEEN PARTY SANEESH PALACE 300 MARCEL LAUREN VSL 6 PM \$45	AFSM
NOV. 8	MEMORIAL MASS ST. KEVIN'S CHURCH 6 PM	PBS50 438-221-8474
NOV. 9	LUPUS AWARENESS RADISSON HOTEL 5500 COTE DE LISE 6 PM \$100	FAMILY SERVICE 514-823-2886
NOV. 15	SOCIAL BINGO ZAMBANGENA RESTAURANT 5 PM \$50	FAMILY SERVICE 514-823-2886
NOV. 15	FATHER & SON - PIDLO PASCUAL RIALTO THEATER 7:30 PM \$130	IE ENTERTAINMENTS 514-621-8725
NOV. 29	ZUMBA WITH AIREEN 4767 CRC 6 PM \$25	FFCAQ 514-886-0092
DEC. 1	CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY 5757 CRC 5 PM	FISM
DEC. 7	CHRISTMAS PARTY OLYMPIA PONTE CLAIRE 5 PM \$65	SWISS
DEC. 7	CHRISTMAS PARTY HOLY CROSS CHURCH - VLS 12 NOON	KANIRUP
DEC. 7	CHRISTMAS PARTY FAMAS BASEMENT POT LUCK	AKLAN ASSOCIATION

Dangerous fire spreads through Old Port Building, killing two and leaving some injured

By Angela Lacuesta, Local Intern Journalist

Early Friday morning at 2am on Friday October 4, 2024, a fire began to spread throughout a three-story hotel building located in the Old Port of Montreal on 400 Notre Dame Street East. About 125

firefighters from the Service de sécurité incendie de Montréal (SIM) began to diffuse the fire and evacuate those who were unable to escape the building while the fire was still spreading at around 2:30pm. There were 25 people found inside of the hotel during that time with two people injured from the incident.

The life-threatening fire began at the ground floor of the Old Port building where a wine bar and restaurant were located. The fire continued upwards to the second and third floor. "First unit on scene were facing a major fire emitting from the first floor of the building. This is a three-story building with a restaurant on the first floor and a 19-room hotel in the second and third floor," said Martin Guilbat, Division chief of SIM at the debriefing press conference. He went on to explain that the owner, Emile Benamor, of the building had gotten a code violation letter in spring of 2023 and had abided with the fixtures in 2024, meaning the building was safe to continue functioning. However, Benamor had owned a previous building in which had also been victim to a fire that had led to the death of seven people in 2023.



An image the day after the fire which shows the aftermath of the Old Port fire that collapsed part of the building and left two dead (Graham Hughes- The Canadian Press)

This had generated suspicion amongst inspectors and the case had gone from an accidental fire to an arson and major crimes case. Inspector David Shane said in the press conference regarding this incident: "I can confirm that the investigation has already been transferred by the Service de sécurité incendie to the SPVM this morning as this fire is of suspicious origin." Shane continued to say that the arson and crime unit are working together to resolve and gain information about the incident.

The fire incident resulted in survivors, injuries, and deaths of those

who were inside the Old Port building. Inspector David Shane said at the first press conference, "Here is what we can confirm: several people left the building unharmed, two people were injured, one of whom was taken to a hospital with some fatalities are expected. We are unable, at this time, to confirm the number of fatalities or their identities." There are now contact numbers if anyone has any information or needs support as a victim or family member impacted by the fire. Shane explains, "A victim and family support center has been set up. If you believe a

loved one may have been in the building you can contact this hotline at (514)-280-1294.

This 24/7 telephone line is set up, solely, for the family and loved ones of the victims". He mentioned if anyone has any information about the incident, they can call 911 or their local police station or contact info crime at (514)-393-1133 or on their website. Recently, there was a police update released to the public saying that two people were found dead in the fire: Léonard Geraudie (43) and Véréane Reynaud-Geraudie (7). The mother and daughter were both from France as reported by various news stations.

As there is suspicion of the origin of the fire, La Service de Police de la ville de Montreal (SPVM) are investigating the scene as it has a connection with another building that also went up in flames in March 2023 where 7 people died due to the fire. The buildings were both owned by the same owner, Emile Benamor. In 2023, he had gotten a fire code violation due to the absence of a fire system and alarms, however the owner abided by the notice and his building was considered safe according to Martin Guilbat, Division Chief. The Montreal police have now taken up this incident as a criminal investigation rather than an accidental fire due to this connection.

Three metro stations on the blue line shut down due to deterioration

By Angela Lacuesta, Local Intern Journalist

At around 7:15pm on Thursday, October 3, 2024, the Société de Transport de Montreal (STM) announced that three stations found on the blue line required an emergency halt: Fabre, D'Iberville and Saint-Michel. The immediate action occurred due to structural degradation found in the mains beams of the station and the amount of time it will take to repair the damaged areas is uncertain as of now.

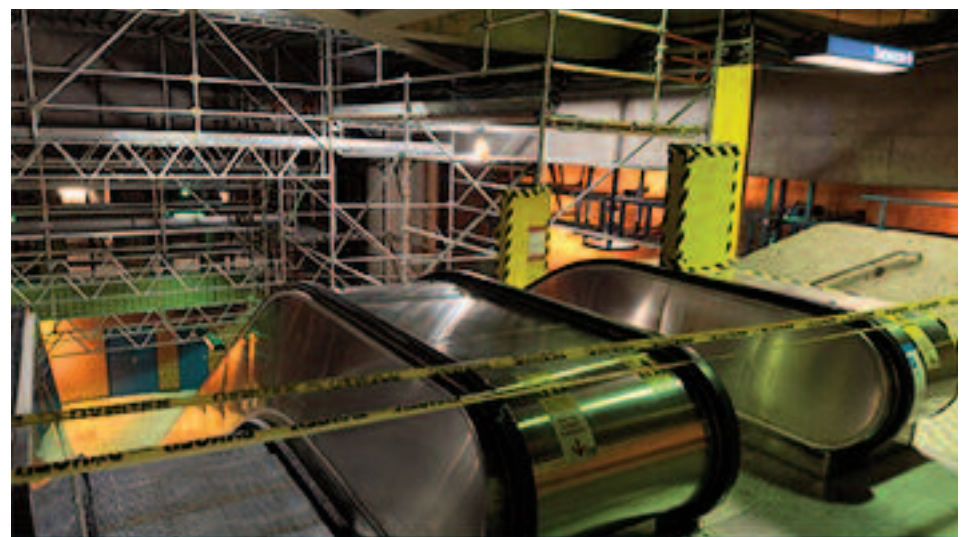
The necessary repairment of the blue line

To fix the necessary metro areas, announced late Thursday evening on October 3, 2024, Fabre, D'Iberville and Saint Michel had to be closed down until further notice. The STM website released a written statement saying: "Construction work currently underway at St. Michel station has revealed a major deterioration of the main beams above the foot bridge, resulting in the immediate closure of the station." The statement informs metro users of the problems underway and to reroute in order to figure out how to get to the places they may

need to travel to until further notice. According to a press conference about this matter, Valerie Plante the Mayor of Montreal, said, "160 000 people take the blue line everyday, so it is important so [that] everything is looked at [...]". This repair is hoped to be efficient and safe for the population to continue using the metro station to go to the areas they need to go.

Due to the degradation of beams above the walkway bridge and the closure of the the three stations, a shuttle bus (Bus 809) had been placed between Saint Michel and Jean Talon which stops at each station in both directions to accommodate for those who require the transportation in any of the three stations as the repairs do not have a definite timeframe. According to Marie Claude Leonard, Chief Executive Officer of the STM, "Our team will work to repair and reinforce the area, but we have to understand that it will take several days, if not weeks." Those who use the blue line to transport to and from from Fabre, D'Iberville and Saint Michel are waiting for the time being, until an update is made about the three stations.

The unforeseen event has



The inside of St. Michel metro station while repairs and reconstructions are being done to prevent safety hazards and issues (Hayder Mahdy - CityNews)

opened the eyes of those who are part of the Société de Transport de Montreal (STM) community whether a passenger or a worker. The question of the government's role in providing funding towards transportation service maintenance such as the STM had been highlighted due to this situation.

"Yes, we want to build additional floors on the house, but the foundation needs to be taken care of," Mayor Valerie LaPlante continued, "the provincial government's investment in asset maintenance is nowhere near what is needed." She underlines the

priority of safety for all those using the metro and the need for government investment when an unexpected situation occurs.

Government investment into public transport maintenance is hoped for by Montreal to allow for safe and functioning transportation services.

Update on the blue line repair

At 10am on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, metro stations,

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Authorized by: Joe Ortona, Chelsea Craig | Printed by: The Filipino Star

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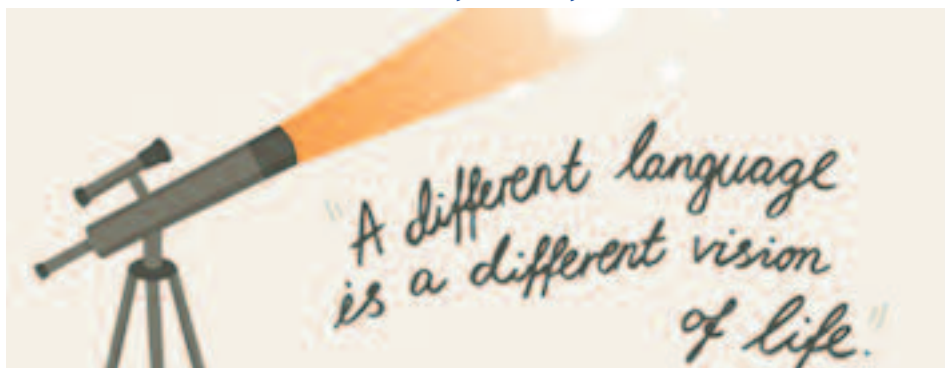
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Souvenir photo with former Laging Handa Scout leaders and other old friends who attended the Ensemble Montreal's Fiesta Tropical membership drive, Sept. 29, 2024 held at St. Kevin's social hall.



Ensemble Montreal Fiesta Tropical Sept. 29, 2024 photo of Luzviminda Ogerio Mazzone, Margie Marcelo, Zeny Kharroubi and Remedios Monteagudo.



Recipes selected
from
various sources

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Brown sugar salmon

INGREDIENTS:

Ingredients

6 Tbsp. dark brown sugar
1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
1 Tbsp. fish sauce
1 Tbsp. fresh lime juice
1/2 tsp. homemade or store-bought berbere, baharat, or garam masala spice mix
1 Tbsp. neutral oil

4 (6-oz.) skin-on salmon fillets
Kosher salt

Directions:

Directions

Step 1

Place a rack in upper third of oven; heat broiler to high. In a small bowl, combine brown sugar, mustard, fish sauce, lime juice, and spice mix until combined and smooth. Reserve 2 tablespoons glaze for serving.

Step 2

Drizzle oil onto a foil-lined sheet tray, spreading to edges with a pastry brush or paper towels. Season salmon on all sides with salt and arrange on prepared tray, skin side down. Pour half of remaining glaze

over salmon.

Step 3

Broil salmon 5 minutes. Remove tray from oven and pour remaining glaze over. Continue to broil until salmon is cooked through and glaze is slightly sticky, 5 to 6 minutes more.

Step 4

Transfer salmon to a platter. Spoon reserved 2 tablespoons glaze over.



BBQ Sheet-Pan Chicken

Ingredients

2 medium sweet potatoes (about 8 oz.), scrubbed, cut into 1" chunks
2 Tbsp. plus 1 1/2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more

1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more

2 tsp. chili powder

1/2 tsp. garlic powder

1/2 c. BBQ sauce, divided

6 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 2 lb.)

1 head broccoli, cut into florets

1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard

1 Tbsp. honey

Lime wedges, for serving (optional)

Directions

Step 1

Place a rack in center of oven; preheat to 425°. On a baking sheet, toss potatoes with 1 tablespoon oil; season with salt and pepper.

Step 2

In a large bowl, combine chili powder, garlic powder, 3 tablespoons BBQ sauce, 1 1/2 teaspoons oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Add chicken and toss to coat. Arrange chicken skin side down alongside potatoes. Wipe out bowl and reserve.

Step 3

Roast chicken and potatoes until chicken skin and potatoes are starting to brown, about 25 minutes.

Step 4

Meanwhile, in same bowl, toss broccoli with remaining 1 tablespoon oil; season with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, combine mustard, honey, and remaining 5 tablespoons BBQ sauce.

Step 5

Brush half of mustard mixture over chicken. Turn chicken and brush with remaining mustard mixture. Add broccoli to baking sheet and stir with potatoes to combine.

Step 6

Bake chicken and vegetables until vegetables are tender and chicken is cooked through, about 20 minutes more. Serve with lime wedges alongside (if using).



Stuffed Peppers

Ingredients:

Ingredients

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
1 medium yellow onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 Tbsp. tomato paste
1 lb. ground beef

1 1/2 c. cooked white or brown rice

1 (14.5-oz.) can diced tomatoes

1 1/2 tsp. dried oregano

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

6 bell peppers, tops and cores removed

1 c. shredded Monterey jack

Chopped fresh parsley, for serving

See All Nutritional Information

You'll Also Love:

Directions

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Step 1

In a large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Cook onion, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 7 minutes. Stir in garlic and tomato paste and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute more. Add ground beef and cook, breaking up meat with a wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 6 minutes.

Step 2

Stir in rice and diced tomatoes; season with oregano, salt, and pepper. Let simmer, stirring occasionally, until liquid has reduced slightly, about 5 minutes.

Step 3

Arrange peppers cut side up in a 13"x9" baking dish and drizzle with oil. Spoon beef mixture into each pepper. Top with cheese, then cover baking dish with foil.

Step 4

Bake peppers until tender, about 35 minutes. Uncover and continue to bake until cheese is bubbly, about 10 minutes more.

Step 5

Top with parsley before serving.



Sesame tofu and broccoli

Ingredients

14 oz. extra-firm tofu
2 small heads broccoli
2 scallions
1 (1") piece ginger, peeled
2 cloves garlic, peeled
3/4 c. low-sodium vegetable broth
1/2 c. reduced-sodium soy sauce
1/4 c. pure maple syrup
3 Tbsp. chili crisp
2 Tbsp. unseasoned rice vinegar
2 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
1 Tbsp. plus 1/3 c. cornstarch, divided
4 Tbsp. neutral oil, divided
Kosher salt

Toasted sesame seeds and steamed white rice, for serving

Directions

Step 1

Place 3 layers of paper towels or a

See "Page 18

Cooking



Social Tidbits

Montreal Community News

Fely Rosales Cariño

Hello to my devoted Social Tidbits readers! Let's appreciate the beauty of nature as we see the leaves changing colors and feel the breeze that signals fall – quietly proclaiming the majesty of God Almighty. And by this time, many households have already celebrated their annual Thanksgiving turkey dinner. Well, let's celebrate thanksgiving always in our hearts, in and out of season.

CCF Montreal, Family Retreat Christ's Commission Fellowship (CCF) Montreal, a Filipino church in the West Island led by Pastor Rene Saquing, holds its worship service on 15556 Cabot, Pierrefonds. It recently sponsored a 'Family Matters' Family Retreat on September 13-15, 2024 at Parkside Ranch, a Christian faith-based, non profit organization located in Quebec's Eastern Townships. Church members and friends who drove to this Overnight and Day Camp had the opportunity to enjoy the various resources of nature such as the waterfront, riding facilities and many more.

Guest Speaker of the weekend was Pastor Rene's brother, Rito "Bong" Saquing Jr., one of the pastors of CCF (an international non-denominational church based in the Philippines) and a motivational speaker regularly seen on TV. So what a treat it was to see Pastor Bong live at the retreat. He commanded the rapt attention of the crowd. His true to life illustrations were touching and worth pondering about. If you ask me, I could listen to his messages all day long. He is that good, really good. His humor was a sure delight. This born again believer was so moved and felt really refreshed, ready to meet the challenges of life. This first retreat of mine was beyond my expectations and will be hard to surpass. And of course his two brothers Pastor Rene and Rod Saquing and their large family were there to give their proud and loving support.

The retreat focused on Family Matters in 3 Sessions: God's Design for the Family, Modeling & Building Relationships, and Forgiveness & Resolving Conflicts. Some of the discussion questions were: How can I improve as a father/mother? Will you forgive me for my shortcomings? What is the family mission statement? I will never forget this retreat. The discussion questions were soul searching. I felt so close to the Lord as if He was holding my hand throughout the whole sessions.

The retreat was not all discussions. Each day we started with morning exercises at the gym, followed by breakfast. Then Praise & Worship

began. Other activities were Fun & Games, Breakout Sessions, Q & A, and Prayer & Bonfire. I couldn't end this write-up without mentioning the angelic voices of the CCF choir. Among them are: Christine Alvarez, Paul Christian Magsino, Don Urganiza, Angel Urganiza, John Connery, Elysha Madrid, and Gabriel Madrid. And the Baptism held at the lake stands as one of the highlights of the retreat – as it follows God's command in the Great Commission, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them



Alan de Sousa, Ville St. Laurent Mayor, speaks to the audience as a guest at the Ensemble Montreal Fiesta Tropical membership drive. Others in the photo are Elisabeth Prass, MNA - D'Arcy McGee; Aref Shalem - Interim Leader of Ensemble Montreal; Stephanie Valenzuela - Councillor, Darlington District; and Sonny Moroz - Councillor, Snowdon District

to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28: 18-20). Baptism is also a public declaration of the believer's faith in Christ. Adult baptism, practiced with full immersion, signifies the believer is "buried with Christ in baptism" and "raised up with Him through faith in God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). One pastor put it this way, it is "a physical sign of a spiritual reality." Before leaving the retreat, I'd like to give a shout out to my nice roommates Julie Ann Cabria and Neil Diaz, who greatly helped me experience a comfortable and enjoyable weekend retreat.

Ensemble Montreal Fiesta Tropical The Ensemble Montreal held a Fiesta Tropicale membership drive at St. Kevin Church Hall on 5600 Côte-des-Neiges last September 29, 2024. This was an evening that guests will not forget. One reason is the very good attendance and the endearing campaign styles of Sonny Moroz (Councillor, Snowdon District) and Filipinos' very own Stephanie Valenzuela (Councillor, Darlington District). Flyers were distributed to

everyone, urging us to vote for Team Joe Ortona, listing his accomplishments in the English Montreal School Board (EMSB). Under Joe's leadership, EMSB has achieved the highest success rate of 95.9% in Quebec, outperforming private schools. Joe also advocates for the English-speaking community. Under the same banner is Chelsea Craig who is running for EMSB Commissioner in CDN-NDG borough. The Filipino community sends an overflow of good luck to Sonny, Stephanie, Joe, and Chelsea in their future.

KAQ's 33rd Anniversary Party Congratulations to President Jeannette Perignon and the Executive Board of the Kahirup (Hiligaynon) Association of Quebec (KAQ) for staging a successful 33rd Anniversary Dinner & Dance. It was held at the Olympia Reception Hall, 3855 St. Jean in DDO on September 27, 2024.

The program started with the Parade of Colors with Martin Dorado, Richard Perignon, and Jarred Caro as flag bearers. The national anthems

held the evening with his polished emceeing.

Before I forget, I saw Marvin Rotrand (former Montreal city councillor, former national director at B'nai Brith Canada, now the Director General of United Against Hate Canada) and wife Jacqui dancing gracefully. Marvin is a great friend of the Filipino community. Also revealing his line dancing expertise was Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM) Chairman Al Abdon and wife Cora. And I heard that Ramon Vicente (President, Filipino Family Services of Montreal) and wife Ester were equally at ease on the dance floor. For a fun evening and a well attended party plus the two heart wrenching vocal solos of Emcee Freddie Espinosa, who could ask for more?

Filipino Canadian Association of Quebec (FFCAQ)

I would like to draw attention to the achievements of the Federation of Filipino Canadian Association of Quebec (FFCAQ) under the competent leadership of President Minda Mazzone. FFCAQ is heavily involved in the Filipino community, offering help and support where needed. These activities occurred over the period 2020 -2022. Just to name a few are their food drives (Pinoy Food Drive, Miracle Montreal Food Drive), student summer jobs, and activities for seniors (Easter egg hunt for Lola, Essentrics with Emy every Saturday, and computer programs for seniors). They showed their support to the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM), Rescue in the Philippines video, and the Ukrainian refugees through fundraising. They participated in a Canada Day Parade Virtual Production and organized the Philippine participation at the parade pre-pandemic time. There's so much more happening and congratulations to FFCAQ President Minda and its Executive Board in its continuing efforts to serve the Filipino community. And special thanks to FFCAQ Vice President Jovy Narvas for sharing their projects.

I close with a well known verse: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 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 4:4-7). May we pray this for each other. Until the next issue, God Bless !

Lupang Hinirang and O Canada were played next. KAQ President Jeannette delivered the Welcome Address followed by the evening's Guest Speaker, Minister and Consul General Rea Oreta. And KAQ Vice President Elsa Montealegre gave the Invocation.

The crowd was treated to a splendid entertainment that included the Filipino Folkdance "Panchita" by the Golden Maidens (Dolly, Jeannette, Vangie, and Melanie), 2 ballroom dances by Dr. Anh Nguyen & Antonio Conde, and Zumba by KAQ Secretary Leah Baldelovar and her group. The partygoers also enjoyed the usual line dancing under the irresistible beats of DJ Dennis Mayuga. Freddie Espinosa

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FILIPINO STAR

SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

Alex Gonzaga remains hopeful about motherhood: 'Even in waiting, I'm grateful'



'I'm not pressuring myself anymore. Because before, I did, but nothing happened. It was my sister who got pregnant,' actress, host and one of the top Filipino content creators, Alex Gonzaga, says in her signature humor.

Alex Gonzaga is "physically ready" to get pregnant anytime but unlike before, she is no longer letting the pressure to conceive get to her.

"Last year, I put a lot of pressure on myself since many people told me that the Year of the Dragon is good luck. Galit nga daddy ko, ba't ako naniwala 'di daw kami Chinese (My daddy even got mad, asking why I believed that when we're not even Chinese). They said the Year of the Dragon brings good fortune, and it turns out my husband was born in the Year of the Dragon," recalled Alex, who's celebrating her third wedding anniversary to Mikee Morada in November.

"But this year, my mind and perspective have opened up more. Even in waiting, I'm grateful because there are so many things I can do. It's really about my perspective that if God hasn't given us this yet, Mikee and I can still do other things.

"We can travel, start a business, because we also have some business ventures. And I get to spend more time with my mom. My

sister recently said, 'Come with us to Italy,' and we were able to get to be together without too many responsibilities (to think of) — of course, except for work — when it comes to our family.

"I'm not pressuring myself anymore. Because before, I did, but nothing happened. It was my sister who got pregnant," Alex quipped.

The STAR spoke with Alex during the launch of her partnership with Chef Ayb's Paragis herbal products (tea and capsule), alongside her parents, Daddy Bonoy and Mommy Pinty, as they are known in showbiz.

The Gonzaga family shared their experiences with the product, which they said they had been using for several months before endorsing it to the public. They explained that the products contain detoxifying, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that promote overall wellness.

"After COVID, I no longer get colds. That's one of the reasons why I'm having difficulty getting pregnant. It's because my immune

system is too strong. I don't know why, but there's something wrong with my thyroglobulin, according to my doctor," shared Alex.

"I've tried IVF (in vitro fertilization) before I met Chaf Ayb's... I'm doing LIT kasi nga po nakita na masyadong mataas ang immune system," she continued, referring to the Lymphocyte Immunization Therapy (LIT), which medical websites described as a "treatment for unexplained infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss."

"My body doesn't recognize pregnancy. That's the way it goes. Nung nagtra-try po kami, hindi masyadong umaangat 'yung aking blood levels ko," she said.

"But the first time I drank it, sobrang sinipon ako, first time ever ako ulit nagkaganun. (I thought) akala ko ba effective ito bakit nagkasakit ako. It turns out it's part — it's really detoxifying all your toxins."

According to Alex, she experienced more detox symptoms, after which she noticed a positive difference. She shared it with her

husband and friends, especially those who had irregular periods.

"Para nga siyang miracle. (It's like a miracle). What's surprising is that it's just around us. God made it, but it turns out it's also medicine. My Ate (Toni Gonzaga) and I have thought about it, like grabe 'no? The things our body needs, it's also God who provides because it's just there. It's nature."

Although it's FDA-approved, Alex stressed that it's always a good idea to consult a health professional. "It's still different if you consult a doctor," she said.

"But what we really want is for other people to have the option that can be of help to them," she explained why they decided to partner with this particular herbal brand.

"It's 100 percent organic, 100 percent natural, and then they added other sources of antioxidants like moringa, guyabano... it's 100 percent Filipino made."

Meanwhile, while discussing the product, Alex shared some good news: "Based on my last test, my body is now positive, meaning anytime I could get pregnant. Kasi tiningnan 'yung blood, pwede pala yun na, 'Oh, your body can't take pregnancy.' Ganun pala 'yun. Right now, it's positive, it's 60 percent okay."

"So, by God's grace, any time now po, maybe later we'll be able to do it," she quipped.

As she waits for God's perfect timing to become a mom, a journey marked by challenges she has bravely opened up about on social media, Alex urged the public to extend more kindness towards women who are still trying to conceive.

She has been on the receiving end of negative comments, including being called "baog" (infertile).

"I think we need to stop using that term. In terms of gender issues, we're very sensitive now, even with body shaming. But why is it that when it comes to women who don't have children, the term 'baog' is used so loosely? We really need to be more sensitive about it," said Alex.

"For me, I can handle it... But what about those who are very sensitive to that issue? I know people who can't even talk about it. We need to be careful when using that word for women because many have inner struggles that we don't know about."

Kris Aquino rules out cancer, reveals marriage plans



Kris Aquino reveals that her doctors suspected her to have colon cancer, the same illness that afflicted her mother, the late president Corazon Aquino. But after conclusive tests, she happily announced that she's cancer-free. However, she remains greatly concerned about her multiple autoimmune conditions, three of which are life-threatening.

Host-actress Kris Aquino gave a new health update since returning to the Philippines last month from the United States after over two years.

The "Queen of All Media" began her lengthy message on Instagram by expressing admiration for those she crossed paths at hospital in Taguig, referencing an "outdoor wedding" she is supposedly planning.

Kris shared she had several tests done, including a computed tomography (CT) scan of her chest and a positron emission tomography (PET) scan, noting the latter is done to rule out the possibility of cancer.

She reminded the public that her mother, the late President Cory Aquino, and grandmother Metring Sumulong had colon cancer, and that Kris shared their blood types with her sons Josh and Bimb as well as

her sisters.

"I don't think Tito Noy (the late President Noynoy Aquino, Kris' brother) is excited to have a reunion with you this soon because he's enjoying the peace and quiet in heaven. You do know how you can talk nonstop?" Bimb said, according to Kris.

Thankfully, Kris said her intestines were found to be clear of any visible signs of cancer, though she did admit mumbling about wanting a new pink Chanel bag in her sleep.

The host-actress reminded everyone she is still battling five of six autoimmune conditions, with three of the diagnosed ones considered life-threatening as it could damage the artery connecting her heart to her lungs, on top of being allergic to all steroids.

Kris then said she was suffering from a Lupus Arthritis flare affecting her

bones and knees, adding she will start physical rehabilitation therapy soon with a walker since her calves "look like toothpicks."

"I promised myself BAWAL SUMUKO. I need a goal, something for all of us to look forward to. #tuloyanglaban," Kris said.

say everyone would get to see her present day journey, and ended by again referencing the supposed wedding.

"Apologies but until my groom and I exchange vows in that very small wedding (but surely not outdoors) I'm choosing to



Kris Aquino with her sons Bimby and Josh in July 2023

She confirmed she was working on a show set to launch by the end of the year thanks to her former ABS-CBN bosses.

While she wouldn't say the show's concept, Kris did

keep my relationship private," Kris finished. "Ibalato niyo na sa'kin 'yun. Invited naman kayong lahat if and when sa kasal." ■

Ria Atayde shares husband Zanjoe Marudo's 'favorite role to date'



Actress Ria Atayde turned to social media to share a photo of her husband carrying their first child.

On Instagram Stories post, Atayde, who recently gave birth, uploaded a photo of her husband's special moment with their baby.

"Fave role of yours to date," she captioned her post.

Atayde's mother, Sylvia, also shared her excitement over her grandchild.

Marudo and Atayde tied the knot in March 2024. Just last June on Father's Day, Atayde announced that they are expecting a child. ■

Showbiz Gossip *Continued from p.15*

Barbie Imperial glad her mother is safe in Albay amid typhoon



Barbie Imperial

Actress Barbie Imperial has been worried for a few days because of the ravages of typhoon Kristine in the country, especially in the province of Albay where she comes from.

Barbie's mother was in Albay when the typhoon hit and ravaged the entire Bicol region.

In an interview, Barbie said that her mother, Marilyn "Bing" Imperial, lives near other relatives there.

The flood water suddenly rose and reached

their house.

"By the grace of God, they are now in safe condition and are doing well.",

Barbie said, "My other aunties, their house was flooded."

"My mom was actually there by herself, so I was really nervous for her, because she didn't have anyone with her."

she added, "I thank God that my mother is okay but I feel bad for all my countrymen." ■

Sam Concepcion reacts to his viral buff physique photo



Pia Wurtzbach opens up about challenges of fame



Pia Wurtzbach

Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach has shared her thoughts on the benefits and challenges that come with being a public figure.

In a social media post, Wurtzbach revealed that luxury brand Prada asked her to pick a card from Miranda July's "Talk the Talk" card game, which features various conversation starters. The card she chose asked, "What seems easy for others but is hard for you?" In response, Wurtzbach chose to reflect on the bright and dark sides of fame.

Being a public figure comes with benefits and challenges. I'm

grateful for the opportunities and appreciate the support from my audience, but navigating public scrutiny can be tough," Wurtzbach wrote in her caption.

She went on to explain how even a simple comment can lead to judgment and heated debates. Wurtzbach admitted that balancing her authenticity with public expectations has been overwhelming at times.

"A quick look at my comment section reveals the extent of that. Ultimately, staying true to yourself is what matters," she added. ■

Singer and actor Sam Concepcion has been all over the internet this weekend after recently posting a photo of himself flexing his buff physique, and fans have been raving about it.

In a post shared on his Instagram, Sam shared a scene from his recent play, *Once On This Island*. The post immediately gained traction from netizens, praising his broad shoulders.

In an interview the 31-year-old pop singer reacted to his viral meme calling him

"daddy."

"I don't know, but it's really funny. Ang witty talaga ng mga Pilipino," he said.

"I don't know how to react to it yet, but my friends have been getting a lot of messages about it. It's funny. To the person who did this, thank you," he added with a smile as he looked at the viral meme.

Sam had just finished his role in *Once On This Island* and is currently portraying the role of Popoy in the musical adaptation of the hit Filipino film *One More Chance*. ■

Ogie Alcasid praises OFWs



Ogie Alcasid and Janice Chang, Global Brand Lead for Sendwave Philippines

Filipino music icon Ogie Alcasid shared that he has long admired the commitment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to provide for their families.

During a press conference held in Morato, Quezon City recently, Ogie praised the hardworking Filipinos abroad as he was announced as the celebrity endorser for Sendwave, an international money transfer service.

Sendwave said the new partnership highlights Ogie's support for the company's mission of

providing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) with secure remittances and fast and charge no transfer fees.

"Noon pa man, saludo na ako sa ating mga OFW. Hindi biro ang kanilang pagkawalay at pakikibagay sa ibang bansa para magtrabaho. Naniniwala ako na sa tulong ng Sendwave, makakampante ang ating mga OFW na magpadala ng pera sa kanilang mga pamilya sa Pilipinas nang sigurado, mabilis, at affordable," said Ogie.

("I look up to our OFWs. Being away from home and adapting

to another country for work is hard. I believe that, with Sendwave, our OFWs can feel confident that their families back home in the Philippines will receive their remittances in a safe, fast, and affordable way.")

Janice Chang, Global Brand Lead for Sendwave Philippines, expressed her enthusiasm for the collaboration.

"We're so excited to welcome Ogie Alcasid to the Sendwave community. Ogie is beloved among Filipino families worldwide for his talent, humor, and deep connection

to family values, making him the perfect ambassador for Sendwave. With Ogie on board, we're confident we can further our mission of helping OFWs support their loved ones, no matter the distance, by sending money with no transfer fees," said Janice.

Sendwave was founded in 2014, and since it kicked off operations in the Philippines in 2021, it has simplified the remittance process for OFWs affordably. Users can send money directly from their phones through the Sendwave app as quickly as text messages.

The app ensures that hard-earned money reaches loved ones fast, eliminating the need for form-filling, queuing, visiting banks or remittance centers. Sendwave supports transfers to bank accounts, cash pickups and mobile wallets, offering a hassle-free experience without additional transfer fees.

Chang emphasized the importance of OFW remittances: "In 2023, OFW remittances constituted nearly 7.7 percent of the country's GDP. These remittances are essential to Filipino families, so it is our mission at Sendwave to ensure that OFWs can send their hard-earned money home easily, safely, and affordably."

As part of Zepz, Sendwave continues to expand its global reach, and with Ogie as its new ambassador, the company is ready to launch exciting new campaigns to help OFWs stay connected with their families back home.

Derek Ramsay and Ellen Adarna welcome new baby



Actors Derek Ramsey and Ellen Adarna welcomed their first baby together after almost three years of marriage.

On Wednesday, Derek posted a lovely photo on Instagram of Ellen holding a newborn baby while seated on a hospital bed.

Derek, 47, wrote in the caption: "My world keeps getting better and better."

Among the celebrities who congratulated the couple on social media include Karen Davila, Matteo Guidicelli, Carmen Soo, Cristalle Bello, Vina Morales, Yam Concepcion, Coleen Garcia, Lucky Manzano, and more.

Derek did not provide any information about the new baby.

In 2023, Derek and Ellen planned to have a baby. But Derek revealed in December that her wife suffered a miscarriage during a trip to Spain in November.

Derek expressed that his Christmas wish was to have a baby.

Ellen and Derek got married in November 2021. Ellen has a child, Elias, with former partner actor John Lloyd Cruz while Derek has a son named Austin with former wife Mary Christine Jolly. ■

FBI zeroing in on where leaked US intel documents were printed

From CNN's Evan Perez, Katie Bo Lillis and Sean Lyngaas

The FBI is zeroing in on a US government office where it believes the leaked US intelligence documents on Israel's preparations for a possible attack on Iran were printed, a US official and another source familiar with the matter told CNN.

FBI investigators working with the Naval Criminal Investigative Service in recent days have narrowed the focus of the investigation to concentrate on locations where the documents could have been printed before they were leaked last Friday. In the wake of classified document leaks in recent years, the federal government has increased its tracking of when employees access and print classified documents.

Both Israel-related documents that were published on social media last week were widely accessible intelligence

products, according to two sources familiar with US intelligence. But at least one appears to be scanned from an officially printed briefing book. Investigators have worked to pinpoint where the documents were printed and who had access to them. The pool of people who printed these pages would be relatively small; sources have said — a key jumping-off point for investigators.

US officials have said it wasn't what the documents described that is worrying so much as the fact that they leaked at all; the breach has simmered in the background of national security circles in Washington throughout the week.

The top Democrat and Republican on the Senate intelligence committee on Thursday urged FBI Director Christopher Wray to "act swiftly in the investigation ... and take immediate action to hold each individual involved fully accountable."

Lebanon has been forced to shut down a third of its health care facilities, WHO warns

From CNN's Hamdi Alkshali

The head of the World Health Organization says more than 100 Lebanese health facilities, representing about a third of all the facilities in the country, have been forced to close as Israel heavily bombards the country in its fight against Hezbollah.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus used his appearance at the International Conference in Support of Lebanon's People and Sovereignty to highlight the devastating impact on the nation's health care system.

Over 2,500 people have been killed and more than 12,000 injured in Lebanon over the past year of fighting, with most of the casualties occurring since Israel escalated its attacks on September 17, said Tedros, who is commonly known by his first name.

The WHO chief said health workers are overwhelmed, with hospitals under severe strain and being targeted in attacks. The situation is dire, with over

1.2 million people displaced, and a cholera case reported in northern Lebanon due to the deteriorating water and sanitation conditions, Tedros said.

WHO has documented 53 attacks on Lebanese health care in the past year, resulting in the deaths of 99 patients and staff, Tedros said. The crisis poses severe risks of disease outbreaks and complications from untreated medical conditions.

"Health care facilities and providers must be safeguarded at all times. Failure to do so is a violation of international law," said Tedros, urging immediate action to protect Lebanon's health care system.

The conference, organized by the French government and hosted in Paris, was designed to "rally the international community to respond to the Lebanese people's needs for protection and emergency relief and identify ways of supporting Lebanon's institutions, especially those of the Lebanese armed forces, which

there for them and her people. After being asked if they had anything else to say regarding the protest, the protester said, "We are not here for war. We want peace in the Middle East and free Palestine and the Arab world."

The tension between Palestinian and Israel communities, particularly on October 7, has influenced the many actions that occurred in Montreal on this date. Many people hope for the end of violence and the promotion of peace. Laplante states, "At all levels, from the UN to states to cities, we call for a halt to any widening of the war, an end to hostilities, the release of hostages, and the beginning of a peace process." The war in the Middle East has caused concern amongst communities and many want to put a stop to this hostility and violence.

From Page 5 October 7 protests

intervened and the situation alleviated as said by Montreal police.

Both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel protest had been seen in Montreal. Supporters of Israel were seen waving flags and chanting on Sherbrooke Street while supporters of Palestine had protested using a drum, waving flags, wearing keffiyehs and chanting "Free Palestine" in downtown Montreal. An anonymous pro-Palestinian protester at the Concordia protest march explained "I am here in solidarity with my Palestinian brothers and sisters and fellow brothers and sisters in Lebanon as well. I want freedom for them to be released". The protester alongside others chanted together in support of Palestine and the end of violence in Gaza. The protester explained that she lost people to the war and that she was

Top US diplomat will meet with key Middle East leaders in London on Friday



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks at a press conference in Vientiane, Laos, on October 11. Tang Chhin Sothy/Reuters

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet with his Jordanian and Emirati counterparts and Lebanon's caretaker prime minister while in London on Friday, a State Department official said.

The conversations with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan are likely to focus on efforts to shore up "day after" plans for stability, security and reconstruction in Gaza following the conclusion of the war.

His meeting with Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati is expected to focus on the ongoing Israeli military campaign against Hezbollah, which has taken a massive toll on the civilian population in Lebanon, including in the capital of Beirut.

The conflict at Israel's northern border has been a focus of Blinken's conversations throughout his trip to the Middle East.

Israel's fight against Hezbollah "cannot lead — should not lead — to a protracted campaign" in Lebanon, the top US diplomat said at a news conference Thursday. He urged Israel to take necessary steps to prevent harm to civilians, the Lebanese military and United Nations peacekeepers.

The top US diplomat's stop in the United Kingdom is the last expected stop on his trip, which included visits to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.

More about the trip: A key crux of the trip has been to push forward efforts to try to secure the release of the hostages and reach a ceasefire in Gaza in the wake of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar's killing. Those efforts seem to have yielded a bit of progress, as Blinken and his Qatari counterpart announced negotiations would resume this weekend. However, there is little expectation of a breakthrough before

From Page 12 Cooking

clean kitchen towel on a plate. Place tofu on towels and cover with another 3 layers of towels or another clean kitchen towel. Place a heavy can or skillet on top of tofu to press moisture out, pouring off excess water and replacing towels as they get soaked, 30 to 45 minutes (you can do this with a tofu press if you have one).

Step 2
Meanwhile, preheat oven to 425°. Cut broccoli heads into florets. Thinly slice scallions and separate green and white parts. Into a medium bowl or large measuring cup, grate ginger and garlic. Add white scallion parts, broth, soy sauce, maple syrup, chili crisp, vinegar, sesame oil, and 1 tablespoon cornstarch and whisk to combine.

Step 3
Break tofu into rough 1" pieces and transfer to a large bowl. Sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon salt, drizzle with 1 tablespoon neutral oil, and gently toss tofu to coat. Sprinkle with remaining

1/3 cup cornstarch and gently toss until tofu is coated. Arrange on a parchment-lined baking sheet and drizzle with 2 tablespoons neutral oil.

Step 4
Bake tofu, turning halfway through, until light brown and crisp, about 25 minutes.

Step 5
When tofu has about 12 minutes remaining, in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat, heat remaining 1 tablespoon neutral oil. Add broccoli; season with salt, then toss to coat broccoli with oil. Cook, stirring frequently, until broccoli is starting to char, 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer broccoli to a plate.

Step 6
Reduce heat to medium. Whisk sauce to reincorporate cornstarch and pour into skillet. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, about 4 minutes. Add broccoli and tofu to skillet and toss to coat in sauce. Top with green scallion parts and sesame seeds. Serve over rice.

A Montreal elementary school is at the centre of a secularism debate. Here's how we got here

A Montreal elementary school is at the centre of a secularism debate. Here's how we got here

Provincial politicians accused of pouncing on religion for political gain
Antoni Nerestant · CBC News · Posted: Oct 22, 2024 5:34 PM EDT | A person in front of a school

Eleven teachers at Bedford elementary school were suspended this past weekend for allegedly creating a toxic environment since 2016. In the last few weeks, an elementary school in Montreal's west-central Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood has been mired in controversy.

This past weekend, 11 teachers were suspended for allegedly creating a toxic environment for students and staff that goes back to 2016. On Tuesday, their teaching licences were also suspended.

The allegations are the subject of a 90-page government report.

Since the suspensions were announced, many provincial politicians have weighed in on the issue, including the premier of Quebec. The conversation about the safety and well-being of students has evolved into a wider discussion about religion in public institutions and the province's secularism law, commonly referred to as Bill 21.

Here's a look at how we got here and how the tone shifted in just a matter of days.

Two provincial government employees were recently sent to Bedford, whose schoolyard is seen here, to monitor the situation.

Bedford elementary school is part of the Centre de services scolaire de Montréal (CSSDM), the largest school service centre in the province that runs many of Montreal's French public schools.

The conversation around Bedford may seem recent, but Quebec radio station 98.5 fm has been covering the story since last year. The station's news coverage — and calls from Liberal MNA Marwah Rizqy for the government to step in — played a major role in sparking the Education Ministry's report, which was made public earlier this month.

Bedford is one of four schools being monitored by the provincial government at the moment. (Ivanoh Demers/Radio-Canada)

The report describes a series of radio news items from 98.5 FM that outline a long list of issues with how these teachers allegedly behaved. They include reports of teachers screaming at students, punishing them in humiliating fashion, treating them differently depending on their gender and preventing resource staff from helping students with learning difficulties.

The allegations raised questions about the teachers' competence and the psychological safety of students there.

The ministry's investigation was conducted between Nov. 16, 2023, and April 19, 2024, and included 73 interviews with witnesses.

According to the report, the 98.5



Eleven teachers at Bedford elementary school were suspended this past weekend for allegedly creating a toxic environment since 2016. (Ivanoh Demers/Radio-Canada)

FM journalist who reported extensively on Bedford spoke to 18 people with ties to the school.

What does the report say?

The Education Ministry's report makes constant references to 98.5 FM's radio columns.

The report found that "overall, and based on the evidence collected, the investigation was able to confirm the allegations mentioned in the radio reports that aired on 98.5 FM."

The report mentions that the teachers punished students with learning disabilities and referred to them as "lazy," simply because they didn't recognize those disabilities as legitimate. They're also alleged to have prevented support staff from entering classrooms.

"Some of them even went as far as hindering surveillance of their classrooms by covering class door windows or interior windows in classrooms that have them," the report reads.

Students at Montreal high school under investigation say teacher made comments that shocked class

Liberal MNA wants Montreal school service centre head gone after report on toxic climate

The report also gathered testimony from people who say certain subjects like sex education and science are neither not taught or sparingly taught to students.

There are 11 recommendations in total that centre on the following key findings:

The teachers' competence level is "worrisome."

The situation at the school hasn't improved and the CSSDM lost control of the situation.

The CSSDM struggles with follow-ups.

Certain teachers try to avoid being evaluated or monitored.

But there are several instances where the investigation's findings differ from what was reported in the media, including situations that have to do with culture and religion.

For example, the report states that the news coverage on Bedford

alluded to teachers were taking part in "religious practices" inside classrooms.

"However, for the most part, these weren't done in front of students, but rather on the teachers' own time," the report reads.

The initial story from 98.5 FM describes tension between Muslim and non-Muslim teachers at Bedford.

According to the Education Ministry's report, last year's news coverage paints the picture of a "dominant clan" made up of teachers of Maghrebi origin clashing with a smaller group of teachers and staff of "various origins."

But the report says the situation is not as clear-cut.

"It is important to emphasize that although the majority clan is mainly composed of people of Maghrebi origin, people of other origins are also associated with it," the report said. "The minority clan is also partly composed of individuals of Maghrebi origin, including some who are strongly opposing the majority clan."

The ministry's report says what was playing out in the school, based on the testimony it gathered, was more of a "clash of ideologies" rather than a cultural one.

It also mentioned that there were tensions with members of a nearby community centre that mainly serves people of Arab origin and had a "strong influence" on school staff. It says people associated with the centre created a social media group where members criticized the school.

Some key details are unclear because it is one of the more heavily redacted sections of the report.

It also mentions an incident where someone "burst into the school" and shouted insults at a teacher before making their way to the school secretary's office — prompting a 911 call — but the person's identity is greyed out. Quebec Education Minister Bernard Drainville

Quebec Education Minister Bernard Drainville appeared on Radio-Canada's *Tout le monde en parle* Oct. 20, 2024, and talked about the situation at

Bedford. (Karine Dufour/A. Media)
What are politicians saying now?

On Sunday evening, during an appearance on *Tout le monde en parle*, a widely viewed Radio-Canada program, Education Minister Bernard Drainville highlighted those findings and stressed the importance of not stigmatizing a specific cultural group.

He was also asked if the situation at Bedford proved that Bill 21, the province's secularism law, was flawed and difficult to enforce.

"No. Honestly, I don't think that it's difficult to apply it," Drainville said. "It's possible that there is a cultural or religious issue at play but the report doesn't say that."

But the tone from Drainville and his Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) party appears to have changed significantly since Sunday evening.

On Monday, Parti Québécois (PQ) Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon said the situation at Bedford highlights the "problem of religion entering into our schools" and that existing laws, including Bill 21, aren't strong enough.

On Tuesday, Quebec Premier François Legault took to X to denounce the situation, describing the suspended teachers as a group attempting "to introduce Islamic religious concepts in a public school."

Quebec premier pushes for stronger secularism in schools following incident in Montreal

Ten days after a report on the toxic climate at Bedford elementary school in Montreal was revealed to the public, Premier François Legault speaks out. He wants secularism rules to be reinforced in schools. It comes as investigators' believe the events described seem to violate the principles laid down in the act respecting secularism.

"In Quebec, we decided a long time ago to get religion out of public schools. We will never go back," the premier wrote.

He's asked Education Minister Bernard Drainville and Jean-François Roberge — a minister who wears many hats including immigration, the French language and secularism — to look into ways to make sure secularism is better enforced in public schools.

During a news conference Tuesday, the education minister was asked why the province is suddenly focusing on the issue of secularism. Drainville replied saying he's been told by the investigation committees that they've seen enough to conclude that secularism isn't properly enforced.

They say politicians weaponize the idea of secularism against cultural communities, especially those who practise Islam, because of the religious garb worn by some of them. #

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Ukraine receives \$50 billion deal from G7 allies.



In talks with Putin amid Ukraine war, Xi calls Russia-China ties a 'strong driving force'



Pope denounces world 'losing its heart ...



Chinese soldiers cannot quit the military without risk of losing their life.



The leaders of Russia and China have pushed back against US pressure, declaring their opposition to any expansion of NATO and affirming that the island of Taiwan is a part of China, as they met hours before the Winter Olympics kicked off in Beijing.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, on Wednesday. India's Press Information Bureau via Reuters