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Linda Lapointe highlights value of The Canada Strong Pass

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Sainte-Thérèse residents encouraged to plant milkweed to **protect butterflies**



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Roofing scam complaints rise

OPC warns Greater Montreal homeowners about aggressive roofing sales tactics

MATTHEW DALDALIAN
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Homeowners across the Greater Montreal area are being urged to exercise caution before signing roofing contracts after complaints against Toiture Darlex rapidly increased in recent weeks.

The Office de la protection du consommateur (OPC) says complaints linked to the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu-based company rose from eight to 22 within days following media coverage by the Journal de Montréal. The allegations involve unsolicited roofing quotes with major price increases during construction.

These also follow vulnerable homeowners who were pressured into accepting expensive additional work.



Charles Tanguay, spokesperson for the Office de la protection du consommateur (OPC).
(Photo: courtesy of OPC)

Charles Tanguay, spokesperson for the OPC, said one of the first warning signs is receiving detailed unsolicited estimates directly in a mailbox.

“Usually, good contractor[s] don’t chase customers like that,” Tanguay said in an interview with Newsfirst Multimedia. “It’s always preferable to choose your own contractors than to be chosen by one.”

According to the OPC, homeowners should be cautious of contractors who pressure them into signing quickly, refuse to provide documents or licences, or dramatically increase prices once work begins.

The warnings come as renovation season begins throughout Quebec and as more residents begin booking roofing work following winter weather damage.

Local homeowner targeted

One of the cases reported by the Journal de Montréal involved Roger Lagacé, a 72-year-old resident of Laval-Ouest who allegedly received unsolicited roofing estimates in his mailbox.

After agreeing to a \$5,000 repair, workers reportedly removed shingles from his roof before another individual arrived demanding roughly \$25,000 for additional repairs.

Tanguay said roofing projects create especially vulnerable situations because homeowners can feel trapped once work begins.

“Consumers report that all the exterior shielding of their roof have been torn off,” he said. “So the roof is at the mercy of the rain and temperature or weather, bad weather. And that makes the situation very uncomfortable and urgent.”

The OPC issued a province-wide warning on April 30 regarding itinerant sales practices connected to roofing and other home renovation sectors. The agency warned that some contractors use weather exposure and urgency to pressure consumers into accepting costly changes mid-project.

Mortgage allegations raise concerns

The situation intensified this week after the second media report detailed allegations involving a 73-year-old Longueuil

homeowner who says a \$9,000 roofing contract ultimately turned into a \$129,000 debt tied to a mortgage signed at a Laval office.

According to the report, the homeowner allegedly signed documents before notary Adama Coulibaly without fully understanding they created a mortgage carrying a 24 per cent annual interest rate through a private lending company.

The homeowner later hired a lawyer in an attempt to revoke the mortgage.

The OPC confirmed checks are underway regarding the lending company involved.

Tanguay said homeowners facing these situations should seek legal advice quickly, particularly if large sums of money or financing agreements are involved.

“One of them is to consult a lawyer very quickly to see what are their options,” he said.

He added that recovering money can be difficult depending on how payments were made.

Industry checks still important

Despite the complaints, Toiture Darlex still holds a valid licence with the Régie du bâtiment du Québec, according to the Journal de Montréal report.

Tanguay noted that even homeowners who verify licences and online reviews can still encounter problems.

“You still could be trapped into something you don’t like,” he said. “Like discovering that there’s more work to be done and that the final bill will be much higher than what expected.”

Still, he said consumers should continue checking whether contractors hold valid RBQ licences and OPC permits before agreeing to work.

The OPC also recommends homeowners seek multiple quotes and independently research contractors rather than accepting unsolicited offers.

Under Quebec rules introduced in November 2024, itinerant sales involving certain home-related goods and services, including insulation and decontamination work, became prohibited. Roofing work itself is not included in those bans.

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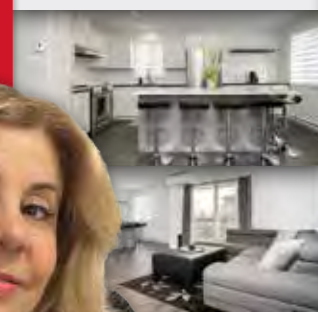
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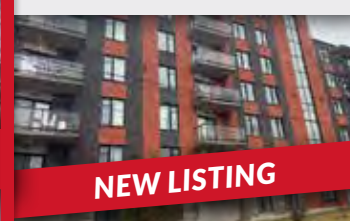
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The Canada Strong Pass looks to promote tourism for the second year in a row

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From June 19th to September 7th, the Canadian government is bringing back The Canada Strong Pass. Introduced last summer, this pass gives Canadian residents and visitors free access to Parks Canada, discounted Via Rail passages and reduced admission prices for museums and galleries across Canada.

The Canada Strong Pass came on the heels of Mark Carney's election as Prime Minister. He ran on the platform of national sovereignty, economic independence, and climate action. The idea to promote Canadian travel was important to not only the economy, but to the welfare of Canadian citizens.

By promoting travel within Canada, the program helps stimulate local economies, specifically in small towns that rely heavily on tourism. Businesses in these towns such as restaurants, hotels, and museums benefit from the increase in foot traffic. This will only reinforce job creations and regional economic growth.

"From museums and railroads to national parks and camping spots, our government is making it easier for families to choose Canada as they make their summer plans," said Minister Steven Guilbeault.

Member of Parliament for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Linda Lapointe, echoed the importance of encouraging Canadians to explore their own country.

"People don't always know what's happening in Canada," Lapointe said. "If you offer them something different, they will enjoy it."

Lapointe also noted that many Canadians tend to stay close to home when planning vacations.

"Many people never travel outside Quebec," she said, adding that there are "so many places to visit in Ontario, the Maritimes, and the Rockies."

The initiative also supports environmental goals that the Canadian government have put into place. By choosing to offer discounted Via Rail fares, this encourages Canadian travelers to use rail transportation. Providing a solid alternative lowers the economic impact compared to air travel.

Given its success last summer, the pass was revived during this past holiday season as well. It was active from December 12th, 2025, to January 15th, 2026, and served as an option for more affordable travel during the expensive holiday season. According to Canadian Heritage, there was a 6.5 percent increase in VIA Rail ridership, a 13 percent increase in visits to Parks Canada sites, an average of 15 percent increase in attendance at national museums, and an average of 6.3 percent increase in attendance at art galleries.

"We can be proud of Canada and proud to be Canadians. Following its success last year, we are bringing the Canada Strong Pass back to deliver real savings and make it easier for families to experience Canada's parks, museums, railways and campsites," said Marc Miller, Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages.

Lapointe also highlighted the value of local tourism experiences, particularly in regions like the Lower Laurentians.

"Agro-tourism offers many places to visit – from apple orchards to local farms and markets," she said. "Places like Saint-Eustache give people the opportunity to discover local history and agriculture."

What are the benefits?

For starters, the Canada Strong Pass is not a physical pass. There is no physical or digital pass to present to acquire these savings, which makes it much easier and accessible for anyone looking to benefit.

The discounts only cover admissions, but there are some parks that might offer discounted tours. There are also no limits on how many times you use the pass, as long as it's within the allotted time frame.

All national museums are offering free admission to anyone under 17 years old and 50% off for young adults aged 18 to 24. For Via Rail, the pass also offers free admission for children aged 17 and younger. From young adults aged 18-24, the discount is 25%, which can save them a lot of money in the long run.

Despite these incentives, awareness of the program remains limited. The North Shore News spoke to several residents who said they had never heard of the Canada Strong Pass prior to being asked about it. Others expressed skepticism, questioning whether the offer was legitimate or assuming it might be a scam when asked about their travel plans.

One person on Facebook even expressed concern that the

questions were an attempt to determine when their home would be empty, suggesting it could be an elaborate scheme linked to a potential break-in. These reactions were quite off-putting, it seems as though people from the North Shore weren't very trusting of government initiatives.

Another person from Blainville was not enticed at all. He stated that he "did not care" who the president of the United States was, and the benefits weren't good enough. He would continue to take his yearly 3-week vacation down south, regardless of what was being said.

North American competition?

Furthermore, the Canadian government has taken steps to lower travel costs for both residents and international visitors, positioning the Canada Strong Pass as a key incentive. By reintroducing the program, the country continues to distinguish itself from the United States.

As of January 1st, 2026, the United States have decided to up the costs for international visitors. The "America First" initiative put in place by President Donald Trump is one of the first changes to National Parks Service (NPS) in decades. The added cost dramatically alters the price of visiting some

of the most beautiful parks in the United States.

Prior to the introduction of this initiative, the cost of visiting major national parks such as Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and Yellowstone was typically around \$35 USD per vehicle. This fee applied to the entire car rather than to individual visitors, meaning the price remained the same whether there was a single occupant or a full group of up to six people. As a result, it was often a relatively affordable option for families or groups traveling together, since the cost could be shared among everyone in the vehicle.

As of the 1st of January, there is also an added \$100 USD surcharge on every person entering the park. This means that if you're a family of 4 going to the beautiful Yosemite park, you can be expected to pay \$435 USD for your trip instead of \$35! Converted to CAD, it comes out to a whopping \$597.78. Not a very affordable vacation, that's for sure.

The standard "America is Beautiful" pass now remains \$85 USD for American citizens, but the price has more than tripled for international visitors to \$250 USD.

These contrasting ideologies will surely encourage people to travel other parts of the world, especially if they do not feel welcomed in the United States.

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OPINION & Editorial



Green recycling policies are quietly bloating your grocery bills

Government eco-mandates function increasingly as a hidden tax on the food you buy

Something very few people are talking about right now is how recycling policy is quietly adding pressure to food inflation in Canada.

For years, Canadians have tried to understand why food inflation has become such a persistent problem. We've debated carbon taxes, labour shortages, transportation costs, supply management, exchange rates, climate events and corporate concentration. All of these factors matter. But another growing source of inflationary pressure has received remarkably little attention: recycling policy.

Across Canada, provinces are rapidly implementing something called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs, shifting recycling costs from municipalities to manufacturers, processors, retailers and brand owners. While EPR policies have existed in parts of Canada for years, the major expansion of packaging rules and producer obligations only accelerated between 2021

and this year. As provinces shifted recycling costs onto producers, compliance costs across the food supply chain increased significantly, costs that are now increasingly embedded into grocery prices.

The idea sounds reasonable: make producers responsible for the waste they generate. But food packaging is not like other packaging. It protects safety, extends shelf life, reduces spoilage, enables transportation and supports food security.

Yet policymakers increasingly treat all packaging as waste.

Quietly, EPR is adding structural costs throughout Canada's food supply chain. Industry estimates suggest compliance and recycling obliga-

tions now total hundreds of millions annually, and those costs inevitably flow into grocery prices. Based on our analysis, EPR-related costs may now be contributing roughly 0.3 to 0.8 percentage points to grocery inflation overall, with some packaging-intensive categories seeing even higher impacts.

Prepared meals, frozen foods, soups, sauces and beverages could be facing inflationary pressures approaching one to 1.5 per cent from EPR costs alone. Dairy, meat, bakery products, canned goods and snacks are also increasingly exposed. That is a lot.

No, EPR is not the main reason food prices are rising. Energy, labour, logistics, exchange rates and commodity volatility remain far more influential. But EPR is becoming another permanent layer of inflationary pressure within an already stressed food system in Canada.

What makes matters worse is Canada's fragmented approach. Every province has different rules, reporting systems, fee structures, accepted materials and recycling capabilities. A package considered recyclable in one province may not qualify in another. For national food manufacturers, compliance has become extraordinarily complex and expensive.

Consumers rarely see these costs directly because they are embedded in retail pricing. Unlike bottle deposits or plastic bag fees, EPR functions more like a hidden tax on packaging-intensive sectors like food and beverages.

More concerning, smaller food manufacturers may already be discontinuing niche products because compliance costs have become too burdensome. Regional processors, specialty

brands, artisanal frozen foods, seasonal products and low-volume SKUs are increasingly difficult to justify economically. Ironically, policies meant to improve sustainability may end up reducing consumer choice while favouring larger multinational firms that can absorb compliance costs more easily.

That does not mean EPR is failing entirely. Companies are redesigning packaging, reducing hard-to-recycle materials and improving recyclability. But Canada should pay attention to models like Oregon's, where recycling modernization focuses on standardized materials, centralized oversight, measurable environmental outcomes and system efficiency. Many experts believe Oregon's approach achieves better environmental results with less administrative friction and potentially less inflationary pressure.

Most importantly, Oregon recognized something Canadian policymakers often overlook: food packaging and environmental sustainability are not enemies. Reducing packaging too aggressively can actually increase food waste, which is often environmentally worse than the packaging itself.

Canada needs a more balanced conversation. Sustainability matters, but policies must also respect affordability, food safety, logistics and competitiveness. Otherwise, we risk building systems that are expensive, fragmented, bureaucratic and only marginally more effective environmentally.

Recycling policy is no longer just waste policy. It is food policy now.

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois

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Canada groceries and essentials benefit aims to ease cost-of-living pressures

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As Canadians continue to grapple with the rising cost of living, the federal government has introduced targeted financial support measures such as the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit and other essential cost relief programs. These initiatives are designed to provide direct assistance to households struggling with higher food prices, inflation, and everyday expenses.

The Canada Groceries Essentials Benefit, or the CGEB, which replace the old GST/HST tax credit. It will also include a one-time GST/HST top-up credit payment that will be distributed to people who were entitled to receive the GST/HST credit in January 2026. This payment will be distributed as early as June 5th, 2026. The benefit is administered automatically through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), meaning recipients do not need to apply separately.

According to Member of Parliament for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Linda Lapointe, one of the biggest advantages of the program is its simplicity and accessibility.

"They receive the Canada Grocery Benefit automatically – they don't have anything to do," Lapointe explained.

This streamlined approach ensures that eligible individuals and families receive support without navigating additional bureaucracy. Payments are calculated using information from annual tax returns, making tax filing a crucial step in access-

ing the benefit.

"It's always based on income tax returns," Lapointe said. "If you don't file your taxes, you won't receive anything from the government. This is very important."

For families already receiving benefits such as the GST/HST credit, the grocery benefit is issued as a supplement. For example, Lapointe highlighted that "a couple with two children could receive about \$1,890 per year," depending on their income level and eligibility.

There will also be a 25% increase in quarterly payments for 5 years, starting in July 2026. For example, last year eligible families of four received \$1,100; this year they will be receiving up to \$1,890. In future years, from 2027 to 2031, families could expect to get \$1,400.

Tough times for Canadians

These payments come at a time when many Canadians are facing persistent financial strain. Inflation has driven up the cost of groceries, housing, and transportation, forcing households to make difficult decisions about their spending.

"There are things happening around the world that we can't control," Lapointe said, pointing to the global nature of inflation. "The war in the Middle East isn't our fault, but it affects gas prices."

Rising fuel costs have had a ripple effect throughout the supply chain, increasing the price of transporting goods and, ultimately, the cost of items on store shelves.

"Everything that has to travel costs more – it's

more expensive," she added. "This is a fact – things are costing more."

As a result, Canadians are adjusting their purchasing habits to cope with higher prices. Many families are switching to more affordable food options and cutting back on discretionary spending.

"People are changing what they buy," Lapointe noted. "They're choosing lower-cost protein instead of higher-cost options like beef."

These changes reflect a broader shift in consumer behaviour, as households prioritize essential goods and seek better value in their grocery purchases. Discount retailers, bulk buying, and sales-driven shopping have become more common strategies for Canadians trying to stretch their budgets.

Another cog in the machine

The Canada Grocery Benefit is part of a wider effort by the federal government to support vulnerable populations and stabilize household finances. Alongside existing programs like the Canada Child Benefit, it provides targeted relief to those most impacted by inflation.

However, despite its potential impact, awareness of the program remains a challenge. Some Canadians may be eligible but unaware of the benefit, while others may miss out simply because they have not filed their taxes.

Lapointe emphasized the importance of outreach and education in ensuring that support reaches those who need it most. Community organizations and constituency offices often play a key role in helping residents understand their eligibility and



complete the necessary paperwork.

In addition to financial assistance, the federal government has encouraged broader measures to address affordability, including monitoring grocery pricing practices and promoting competition within the food sector. While these efforts aim to provide long-term stability, immediate relief programs like the grocery benefit remain essential in the short term.

For many Canadians, the benefit offers temporary but meaningful support. By offsetting some of the cost of food and necessities, it can help families manage their budgets and reduce financial stress.

Still, experts caution that one-time payments are not a permanent solution to rising costs. Structural changes, including wage growth, housing affordability, and supply chain stability, will be necessary to address the root causes of inflation.

In the meantime, programs like the Canada Grocery Benefit serve as a critical safety net. As Lapointe pointed out, ensuring that Canadians understand how to access these supports is just as important as the benefits themselves.

For those struggling to keep up with everyday expenses, filing taxes and staying informed about available programs may make a significant difference.

Pool scams in the North Shore becoming more prevalent

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With pool season and hot weather quickly approaching, people of the North Shore are rushing to get their pools operational. Everyone wants to be the first on their street to have their pool open and ready to swim in, right?

The Office de la protection du consommateur (OPC) and the Association des commerçants de piscines du Québec (ACPQ) are urging residents to be careful of elaborate scams involving the opening and closing of their pools, lining replacements, and installations of overground pools especially.

Scammers are taking advantage of people who are looking for something quick and efficient. The root of these scams will usually take place on Facebook marketplace.

The scammer typically posts a vague ad claiming they can replace your liner or open your pool at a significantly lower price than established companies like Piscine Geysler or Aquanord. They usually don't have references and their account is either an alias, or a manufactured company name. Given that Facebook marketplace isn't regulated, it's becoming more and more difficult to decipher who or what is actually trustworthy.

"Individuals that don't respect the law will use all kinds of names," said Charles Tanguay, the spokesperson for the Office de la protection du consommateur. "You have to be careful because even if you know a scammer by photo, they will use legitimate businesses to cover them up."

Higher risk than ever

On April 13th, the OPC released a statement urging people to be wary of new technologies which can result in new types of fraud. Gone are the days of old-fashioned scams – like street hustles where you had to guess which cup concealed the money, or mailed letters asking for small "processing fees" in exchange for promised rewards. Today's schemes have evolved far

beyond these simple tricks, becoming increasingly sophisticated and harder to detect.

What makes the situation even more concerning is how quickly these listings can appear and disappear, leaving little trace behind. A profile might seem active and responsive for a short period of time, only to vanish entirely once enough deposits have been collected.

Another growing issue is the reuse of legitimate business identities. Some fraudsters will copy names, logos, or photos from real pool companies to make themselves appear credible at a glance. To an untrained eye, everything can seem consistent, especially when communication remains confined to apps such as Messenger or Instagram DMs. This makes it easy for individuals to believe they are dealing with established professionals when, in reality, there is no connection at all.

"Remember the rules, never sign anything too quickly, verify their identity, don't trust anyone, and only put a small deposit to avoid losing too much money," said Tanguay. "When Spring comes around you have to be very careful."

There is also a timing factor that plays directly into the hands of scammers. Early in the season, when demand spikes and reputable companies are often fully booked, homeowners may feel pressured to accept the first available option. That urgency can lead to skipped checks.

Taken together, these factors create an environment where fraud can thrive. This isn't because people are careless, but because the systems scammers use are designed to exploit trust, convenience, and urgency all at once.

Fencing scams?

With the Quebec government extending pool fence compliance deadlines to September 2027, many homeowners who have yet to install proper enclosures could find themselves under pressure.

As that deadline approaches, some may be tempted to seek out lower-cost options in an effort to meet the new requirements quickly.

According to Tanguay, this growing demand for cheaper solutions could create a significant risk for consumers.

"We've started to receive complaints regarding fencing around pools," said Tanguay emphatically. "Either they take a deposit and never show up or they do a very cheap job which doesn't stand the test of time."

The ACPQ notes that it's very important to control access to your pool. That includes having a fence that's at least 1.2 metres, that cannot be climbed through and which a 10cm spherical object cannot pass. The doors to the pool should also automatically close and lock by themselves.

To avoid serious injury or even death, the ACPQ has also advised pool owners to never leave toys in the pools unattended, as it reduces the risk of children getting in to retrieve them.

Red flags to watch out for

- Prices that are significantly lower than the competition
- Requests for large deposits, either in cash or

via e-transfer

- No physical address or business registration
- Hesitancy to provide written contracts or invoices
- Poor-quality profile (odd name, no friends, few reviews, basic stock photos)
- Pressure tactics like saying "limited availability" or "one day deal only"

Before hiring, consumers should verify if a company is registered with the Registraire des entreprises du Québec (REQ), check reviews across multiple platforms, and confirm that the contractor holds proper insurance. The OPC also recommends getting a written contract detailing the scope of work, timelines, and payment structure, which can be handy in case where scammers try to extort you.

Residents who feel as if they've been scammed can file a complaint with the OPC or directly with Facebook Marketplace to report fraudulent listings. Suspicious activity can also be reported to the local police.

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Blainville elected officials take on new roles within Quebec municipal union

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Several members of Blainville's municipal council have been elected or appointed to important roles within the Union des municipalités du Québec, following the organization's annual Assises, held from May 13 to 15 at the Québec City Convention Centre.

The appointments give Blainville a stronger presence in provincial municipal discussions at a time when cities are increasingly called upon to address complex issues such as youth participation, immigration, climate change, culture, community life and local governance.

Blainville Mayor Liza Poulin will serve as co-president of the 2027 Assises, which will be held in Montreal. She will share the role with Gaétan Pageau, mayor of L'Ancienne-Lorette. Together, they will help define the overall direction of the event, shape its guiding theme, contribute to programming choices, select content and represent the institution.

The Assises are one of the major annual gatherings of Quebec's municipal world. They bring together elected officials and municipal leaders to discuss issues affecting cities and towns across the province. For Blainville, having its mayor in a leadership role for the 2027 edition places the city closer to the centre of those conversations.

Councillor Jade Laporte, who represents the Saint-Rédempteur district, was elected to the Commission des jeunes élus et élus.



The commission focuses on youth civic participation, the next generation of municipal leaders, support for young elected officials and awareness of youth-related issues within municipal councils.

Laporte was first elected as a municipal councillor in November 2025. Her new role will allow her to exchange ideas with young elected officials from other municipalities and contribute to discussions on democratic participation and political renewal. At a time when many communities are trying to increase public engagement among younger residents, this commission's work has direct civic relevance.

Councillor Philippe Magnenat, who represents the Plan-Bouchard district, was elected to the UMQ's Commission on Immigration. That commission examines the realities and challenges faced by municipalities in relation to immigration, regional attractiveness, sustainable development and successful integration.

Magnenat, originally from Switzerland, has lived in Blainville since 2002 and has been involved in immigration and diversity

issues. He also contributed to the creation of a friendship pact between Blainville and the City of Neuchâtel. His participation on the commission connects local experience with broader provincial discussions about how municipalities welcome and integrate newcomers.

Other Blainville councillors already hold roles within UMQ commissions. David Malenfant, councillor for Côte-Saint-Louis, is a member of the Commission on Culture, Recreation and Community Life. Francis Allaire, councillor for Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption, sits on the Commission on the Environment and Climate Change.

Together, these roles reflect the growing importance of municipal governments beyond roads, zoning and local services. Cities are now central actors in social inclusion, climate action, cultural life, youth engagement and democratic participation. For Blainville residents, the presence of several local elected officials within UMQ bodies may help ensure that the city's perspectives are heard in province-wide municipal debates.

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City of Lorraine earns two provincial awards for its “Slow Down!” road safety campaign



From left to right: Municipal council members Jocelyn Proulx, Martine Guilbault, Pierre Barrette, Jean Comtois, Mayor, Diane D. Lavallée, Patrick Archambault, and Lyne Rémillard. (Photo: Clair obscur Multimédia, Sylvain Fortier)

NEWSFIRST MULTIMEDIA
info@newsfirst.ca

The City of Lorraine is celebrating major recognition after its public safety initiative *Ici, roule au ralenti!* (“Here, We Slow Down!”) earned two prestigious provincial awards in Quebec’s municipal sector.

The campaign—symbolized by its now-famous snail mascot—received the **Mérite Ovation municipale** from the Union des

municipalités du Québec in the Public Safety category, highlighting innovative municipal projects that deliver concrete, lasting benefits to communities. Lorraine also won a **Gold Plume of Excellence** from the Association des communicateurs municipaux du Québec (ACMQ) for best behavioural and public relations communication campaign.

“These distinctions show that when a community rallies around a shared goal, we can truly influence behaviour and strengthen safety across our territory. I’m especially proud to see this

campaign—driven by our youth and our residents—shine across Quebec,” said Mayor Jean Comtois.

Both juries praised the project’s strategic design, its citywide rollout, strong community engagement, and the powerful message conveyed by children. Rather than relying solely on awareness or enforcement, the campaign focuses on positive social influence, aiming to make slower driving a shared community norm.

“These recognitions highlight the power of communication that doesn’t just inform, but inspires positive behavioural change. With *Ici, roule au ralenti!*, we created a simple, human, unifying message that naturally became part of residents’ daily lives—a true collective reflex,” said municipal councillor Lyne Rémillard, responsible for communications and citizen relations.

Measurable results on the ground

Early observations show a clear shift in driving habits across Lorraine, where the speed limit is set at 30 km/h. Today, 63% of drivers travel between 25 and 35 km/h—representing a 5% improvement in compliance compared to the same period last year.

Over the past year, the campaign has sparked several major initiatives, including “**Operation Snail**” in partnership with the Thérèse-De Blainville Intermunicipal Police Board, a multischool walk involving more than **1,100 students**, and a largescale visual rollout with over **1,000 signs** installed throughout the city.

Municipal councillor Patrick Archambault, responsible for public safety, expressed pride in the campaign’s impact: “With *Ici, roule au ralenti!*, we chose to go beyond traditional approaches and build a true collective movement around road safety. The results show that when a message is positive, human, and community-driven, it can genuinely transform driving habits.”

The snail mascot has become a unifying and easily recognizable symbol across the municipality. Supported by schools, families, community partners, and municipal teams, the campaign’s message has gradually woven itself into residents’ daily routines.

With these provincial honours, the City of Lorraine reaffirms its commitment to developing creative, human-centred, and community-driven initiatives that enhance safety and quality of life for its population.

Sainte-Thérèse encourages residents to plant milkweed to help protect monarch butterflies

MARIA DIAMANTIS
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The City of Sainte-Thérèse is encouraging residents to help protect monarch butterflies by planting milkweed in their own gardens and landscaped areas.

As part of its “Monarch-Friendly City” initiative, Sainte-Thérèse has planted milkweed in flower beds at various locations across the municipality. The goal is to support the monarch butterfly, an essential pollinator whose population is threatened.

Milkweed is crucial to the survival of monarchs. It is the plant on which monarch butterflies lay their eggs, and it is the only food source for monarch caterpillars. Without enough milkweed, monarchs cannot complete their life cycle, even if adult butterflies can find nectar from other flowers.

The city is therefore inviting residents to take part in the effort by adding milkweed to their own landscaping. Private gardens,

front yards, backyards and naturalized spaces can all become small but useful habitats for monarchs and other pollinators.

The initiative also reflects the growing role of municipalities in environmental protection. Cities are increasingly involved in biodiversity, urban greening and climate adaptation, not only traditional services such as roads, waste collection and infrastructure.

For Sainte-Thérèse, planting milkweed is a concrete local action that connects municipal planning with citizen participation. By planting on public land, the city sets an example. By encouraging residents to do the same, it turns monarch protection into a shared community effort.

Pollinators such as monarch butterflies are important to healthy ecosystems. Their decline points to broader environmental challenges, including habitat loss and the reduction of natural spaces. Creating more pollinator-friendly areas can help strengthen local biodiversity.



Residents who wish to participate are encouraged to plant milkweed in appropriate areas of their properties, while making sure it does not interfere with sidewalks, visibility or neighbouring spaces.

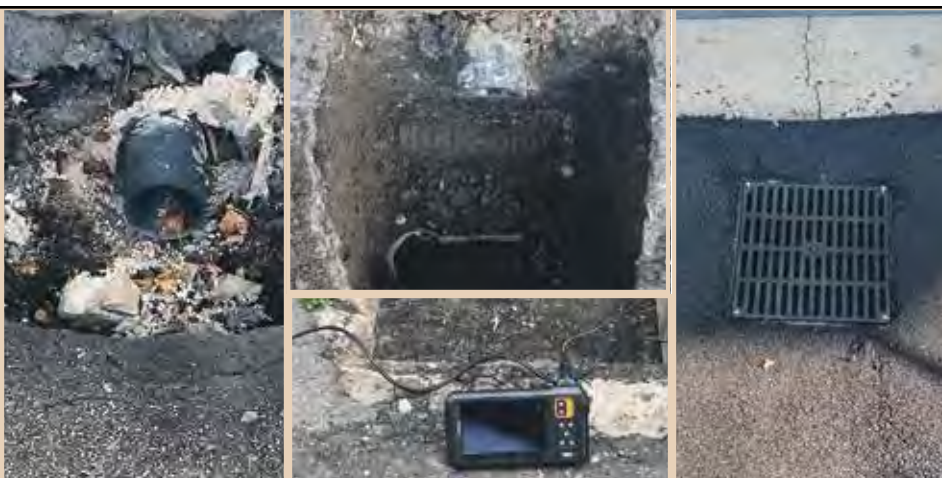
Sainte-Thérèse’s campaign is more than a beautification effort. It is a small but meaningful environmental measure aimed at protecting a threatened species, supporting biodiversity and reminding residents that even modest actions at home can contribute to a healthier community.

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New emergency housing centre opens in Sainte-Thérèse to address growing homelessness needs

MARIA DIAMANTIS
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A new emergency and transitional housing centre has opened in Sainte-Thérèse, marking an important addition to the social safety net in the Thérèse-De Blainville region at a time when homelessness and housing insecurity continue to place pressure on communities across Quebec.

La Maison François, operated by Resto Pop Thérèse-De Blainville, will provide support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to people experiencing homelessness or severe residential instability. The centre was officially inaugurated on May 22 by Lionel Carmant, Quebec's Minister Responsible for Social Services and the Fight Against Homelessness.

The opening is significant because, until now, there was no local emergency housing resource of this kind available in the area. For vulnerable people in Thérèse-De Blainville, that meant having to rely on services outside their immediate community or facing the risk of remaining without shelter.

La Maison François offers nine housing places, including five emergency beds for short stays of up to 14 days and four transitional beds for stays of up to 90 days. The centre also includes continuous intake services, a day centre, and three transitional rooms in the community, designed to help people move through the different stages of residential and social stabilization.

The Quebec government is supporting the project with recurring funding of \$870,926. According to Minister Carmant, the goal is not only to provide immediate shelter, but also to offer longer-term accompaniment so

that vulnerable people can regain stability and dignity.

The project also reflects a broader shift in how homelessness is being addressed. Rather than treating emergency shelter as a stand-alone response, La Maison François is presented as part of a continuum of services, combining food support, temporary housing, social reintegration, and community-based follow-up.

Resto Pop Thérèse-De Blainville has been active in the community for more than 25 years. Its work has included community meals, work platforms, and social reintegration measures for people experiencing homelessness or precarious living conditions. La Maison François now expands that mission into emergency and transitional housing.

Eric Girard, Minister of Finance, Minister Responsible for Infrastructure and MNA for Groulx, called the opening good news for the Laurentians, saying it will provide concrete and humane services directly in the community.

Julie Delaney, president and CEO of the CISSS des Laurentides, also welcomed the initiative, emphasizing that adapted services for vulnerable people remain a priority for the regional health and social services network.

The centre was developed with support from Quebec's emergency homelessness measures and the 2021-2026 interministerial action plan on homelessness.

For the Thérèse-De Blainville region, La Maison François represents more than a new building or service point. It is a civic response to a growing public issue: how municipalities, community organizations, health institutions, and the provincial government can work together to protect people whose housing situation has become unstable or unsafe.





DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

SAME OLD SONG

Q A few years ago I put together and headed a special team at work, consisting of myself, a close female friend, and a male.

We became a close team just by personality and the nature of our work. He was single when we began working together and private in his personal affairs. When he married, I recall us being surprised. I also recall noticeable stress as they adjusted to one another.

He and I continued to come together as friends and more. It was quite some time before we became lovers. I remember all the subtleties that developed as two people became closer. These were the dynamics of a man and a woman staking a claim and becoming more inclusive.

A year later emotional intimacy began to surface, and we openly talked about feelings and desires. We acted on our feelings, and headstrong went into an affair lasting the following year. It was difficult balancing the pull to be near each other with the burden of guilt and secrecy.

When it came out in the open at work, we reorganized the team and moved forward. We still continued to see each other until recently. I was out on training for some time, and that was a good opportunity for me to break away.

When I returned I learned they purchased a house together. Prior to this purchase, there was no house and no kids. Honestly, looking back, it was not that I thought I had the better relationship or was competing for his love.

It was the many small indicators that they had no marriage. There wasn't gossip, just messages picked up if one were paying attention. I have broken away now, and it is a most painful process. I will spend the next year overseas for work.

We have never had that final conversation, the one that brings closure or at least allows each person to rid themselves of some guilt and shame. I know life moves forward, and we end up in different places. But I feel we are so unresolved now that we will resurface

somewhere down the road.

Yvonne

A Yvonne, when Wayne was growing up, he spent much of his time fishing, hiking, and camping. One of his friends sometimes brought a banjo, and after dinner around the campfire he would play and sing.

Wayne's favorite was "The Big Rock Candy Mountain," a hobo ballad. The Big Rock Candy Mountains are a tramp's paradise, where the sun shines every day on the birds and the bees and the cigarette trees. Alcohol trickles through the rocks, the hens lay soft-boiled eggs, and the hobos banished the jerk who invented work.

There must be a lost verse to that song, the verse about closure, because the only place where you are likely to find closure is the Big Rock Candy Mountains. This world does not work in terms of closure. We are born in the middle of things, and we leave in the middle of things.

In this life the only closure we normally get is the closure which occurs within ourselves. You want to believe nuance over a public ceremony and a binding legal contract. You want to believe rumor over the gold band on his wife's hand.

That's more than self-serving. It's self-deceiving. With you he didn't mention his engagement, wedding, or house plans. What would have happened to his chances for an affair if he had? His percentages would have dropped, wouldn't they?

You don't want closure but for this relationship to continue, because if it doesn't, then he was just having sex with you. If you want one rule to follow in life, it's this. Stop listening to what people say and start looking at what they do.

Who is this guy? A man who commits adultery on his new bride, just another bum in the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

Tamara

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

Send letters to: Direct Answers, PO 964 Springfield, MO 65801-0964

or email: GetInTouch@WayneAndTamara.com

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Laurentians public health warns parents about risks of amateur tattooing among teens

MARIA DIAMANTIS
info@newsfirst.ca

The Laurentians public health authority is warning parents and young people about the health risks linked to amateur tattooing, after a report involving adolescents using a tattoo device.

In a public notice issued May 14, 2026, the Direction de santé publique des Laurentides said it wanted to raise awareness about the dangers of homemade or non-professional tattooing, especially among youth. The warning comes as tattoo kits have become increasingly easy to buy online, making it possible for teenagers and untrained individuals to attempt tattoos outside professional settings.

According to public health officials, tattooing has grown in popularity in Quebec among both adults and young people. But while professional tattoo studios are expected to follow strict

hygiene and sanitation standards, amateur tattooing can expose people to serious health risks.

One of the main concerns is the use of non-sterile or previously used needles. If needles are shared or improperly handled, they can transmit blood-borne infections, including HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Public health officials also warn of bacterial infections in the wound, especially when the skin is not properly disinfected or when equipment is not sterile.

Another concern involves tattoo inks. The Laurentians public health authority notes that inks used in amateur tattoo kits are not regulated in the same way and may contain unpredictable or harmful substances. This can increase the risk of allergic reactions or other complications.

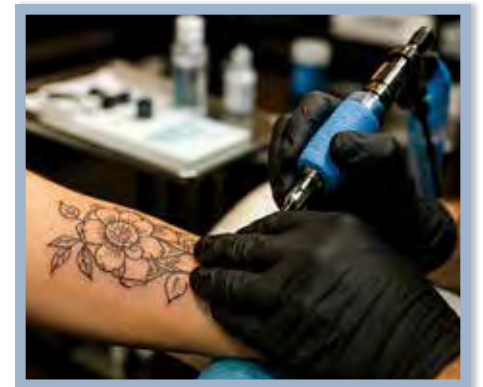
The message to families is clear: parents are encouraged to speak with their children about the risks before they experiment with tattooing.

Anyone considering a tattoo should seek information about possible health consequences and avoid homemade or amateur procedures.

Public health officials recommend choosing a professional tattoo studio where hygiene rules are respected. These include handwashing, the use of new gloves, skin disinfection, and sterile, pre-packaged, single-use needles. These measures are essential to reducing the risk of infection.

The warning also includes advice for anyone who has already received an amateur tattoo. If redness persists, or if there is swelling or intense pain, the person should consult a health professional quickly. These symptoms may indicate an infection or another complication requiring medical attention.

In cases where a needle has been shared, the recommendation is more urgent. Public health officials advise seeking medical evaluation at an emergency department within 72 hours of



exposure. This allows health professionals to determine whether preventive treatment is needed for HIV or hepatitis B, verify vaccination status for hepatitis B and tetanus, and carry out screening for HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

The issue is not only personal, but civic. It touches youth health, prevention, access to reliable information, and the role of public institutions in protecting communities from avoidable harm. As tattoo kits become more accessible online, the Laurentians warning highlights the need for families, schools, health authorities and young people to treat amateur tattooing as a real public health concern, not simply a trend.



MARIA DIAMANTIS
info@newsfirst.ca

Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac is turning to citizen participation as it continues to shape decisions affecting urban planning, recreation, culture, community life and the environment.

Earlier this month, the city invited residents to submit their candidacy for several municipal committees and commissions, inclu-

ding the Comité consultatif d'urbanisme, the Commission des loisirs, de la culture et de la vie communautaire, and the Commission de l'environnement et de la mise en valeur des espaces verts.

Although the application period closed on May 26, the initiative highlights the growing role of citizens in municipal decision-making. These committees allow residents to contribute their experience, concerns and ideas before recom-

mendations are brought to municipal council.

The Comité consultatif d'urbanisme, commonly known as the CCU, plays an important role in the development of the city's territory. It studies files related to land use, construction, zoning and urban planning, then submits recommendations to council. These may include minor exemptions, architectural integration plans, subdivision projects and development proposals.

The CCU meets once a month, and its members serve two-year mandates, which may be renewed. Its work is especially important in a growing municipality, where development must be balanced with quality of life, neighbourhood character and long-term planning.

The Commission des loisirs, de la culture et de la vie communautaire also meets monthly. Its mandate is to reflect on recreation, cultural activities, community life and citizen engagement. Discussions may include sports and cultural programming, public events, parks, leisure infrastructure, trails, public spaces, accessibility and support for local artists.

A third body, the Commission de l'environnement et de la mise en valeur des espaces verts, focuses on environmental protection and sustainable development. It studies issues such as natural environments, green spaces, wooded areas, wetlands, trails, climate adaptation and the city's environmental practices. This commission meets four times a year and may also propose concrete projects to improve environmental quality.

The initiative falls within the scope of civic journalism because it concerns municipal government, citizen participation, urban planning, environmental issues and community services.

For residents, these committees are one of the most direct ways to participate in local democracy between elections. They give citizens a structured opportunity to influence discussions that affect everyday life, from parks and public spaces to development, inclusion and environmental resilience.

At a time when municipalities are facing increasing pressure related to growth, climate change, infrastructure and community needs, citizen input can help ensure that decisions are not made in isolation. In Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac, the recent call for committee members is a reminder that municipal democracy does not end at the ballot box.

Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-lac looks to citizens for input on urban planning, culture and the environment



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HOROSCOPE

Week of **MAY 31 TO JUNE 6, 2026**

The luckiest signs this week:
PISCES, ARIES AND TAURUS



ARIES
A summer getaway is on the horizon. You're on a tight deadline, so your plans will require organization and discipline. Any learning experience will support your progress. A busy social life will improve your physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.



TAURUS
Strong emotions may surface, but your determination will help you overcome current challenges. A move or career change will bring you closer to a long-held dream. Stepping outside your comfort zone will be essential for true growth.



GEMINI
Thoughts and reflections on love will consume your headspace. Some romantic relationships may create anxiety because they demand real commitment. To move forward with confidence, take a step back and assess each situation clearly.



CANCER
Your health will be a top priority this week. A balanced diet will help you reach your personal goals. You may also consider starting a home-based business. However, you'll need patience and strong organization before it becomes a stable source of income.



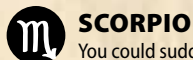
LEO
Your self-confidence will soar, positively influencing your decisions. Those close to you will express appreciation and affection, reinforcing your improved self-image.



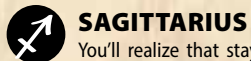
VIRGO
Family matters will demand your attention. To help ease tensions with a loved one you disagree with, you'll need to stay calm and distance yourself. If you're planning a move, your anxiety will spike. However, preparation will greatly reduce your stress.



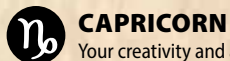
LIBRA
A concern may weigh heavily on your shoulders, but you'll find a sympathetic ear. You'll speak honestly and share your feelings without hurting anyone. Open and respectful communication will lead to peace and mutual understanding.



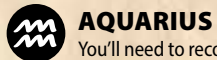
SCORPIO
You could suddenly receive the answer to your financial or emotional difficulties, possibly through a dream. This revelation will bring clarity. Events will gradually fall into place, allowing you to better understand and reorient your current situation.



SAGITTARIUS
You'll realize that staying still leads nowhere. You'll face your fears with determination and move confidently toward your goals, turning obstacles into meaningful opportunities.



CAPRICORN
Your creativity and artistic talents will become a big part of your life. You may even consider volunteering for a meaningful cause. You'll sharpen your intuition, revealing inspiring abilities that guide your path.



AQUARIUS
You'll need to reconsider certain friendships that no longer align with your values. To protect your relationships, avoid lending money. Honesty and transparency will help you build strong, lasting and mutually enriching friendships.

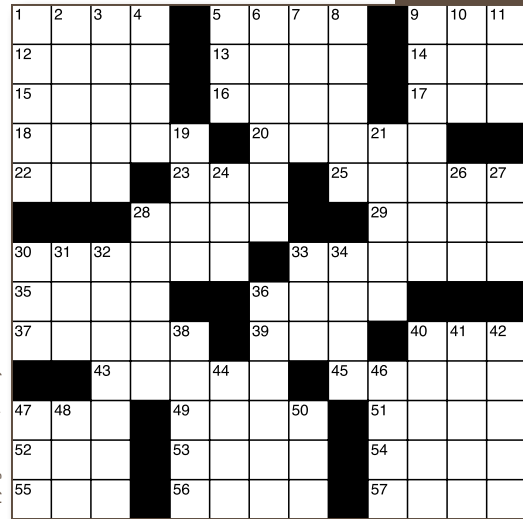


PISCES
You'll be given new and rewarding responsibilities at work. If you're looking for a job, a promising offer with good working conditions will come your way. A loyal friend will support you in your efforts, opening the door to excellent opportunities.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORD

PUZZLE N° 305



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ACROSS

1. Tiff
5. Skip
9. Faucet
12. Caution
13. Woman of rank
14. Publicize
15. Farm unit
16. Decline
17. Slick
18. Rental agreement
20. Small lumps
22. Like a desert
23. Sidekick
25. Dingy
28. Carpet's surface
29. Epoxy
30. Business place
33. Cowboys' loops
35. Longest river
36. Extended credit
37. Precise
39. Leatherworker's tool

40. Sales pitches
43. Poor
45. Swiss call
47. Male descendant
49. Mother
51. Played part
52. Ram's mate
53. Organize
54. Lacking moisture
55. ___ aboard!
56. Hiker's abode
57. Smaller amount

DOWN

1. Burn with water
2. Harness horse
3. Display
4. Kickoff props
5. "___ Folks at Home"
6. Sculpting stone
7. Movie hero
8. Errors in print
9. Mortarboard
- danglers
10. Feel unwell
11. Snoop
19. Long heroic poem
21. Sired
22. Beer's cousin
26. In ___ course
27. You betcha!
28. Cake unit
30. First digit
31. Mend
32. Sleepwear fabric
33. Mint
34. Lone
36. Nonprofessional
38. Attract
40. Dote on
41. Cold-cuts stores
42. Snow coasters
44. Hill's partner
46. Uttered
47. ___ anemone
48. Night hooter
50. Picnic insect

Sudoku

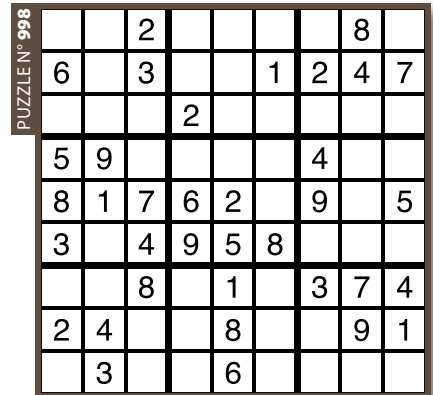
HOW TO PLAY

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once.

Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line.

You already have a few numbers to get you started.

Remember: You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.

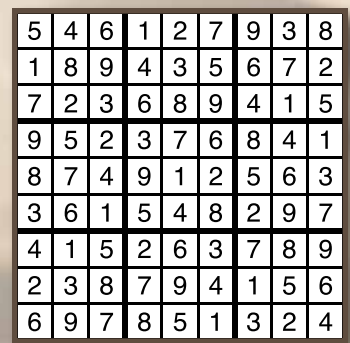


LAST ISSUE'S ANSWERS

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|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Strawberries (Smucchies) | 8. Cauliflower |
| 2. Raspberries | 9. Green Beans |
| 3. Blueberries (pint) | 10. Sweet Corn (3) |
| 4. Red Grapes | 11. Cantaloupe |
| 5. Pineapple | 12. Apples (3) |
| 6. Sweet Mini Peppers | 13. Potatoes (3 lbs bag) |
| 7. Broccoli (crown) | 14. Lettuce |
| | 15. Cucumber |
| | 16. Tomatoes (2) |

SMALL BASKET (\$22)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Red Grapes | 6. Baby Carrots |
| 2. Raspberries | 7. Lettuce |
| 3. Blueberries | 8. Cucumber |
| 4. Broccoli (crown) | 9. Lime |
| 5. Sprinkles Tiny Tomatoes | 10. Lemon |
| | 11. Potatoes (3 lbs bag) |

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