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ELECTIONS 2026




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SWLSB focusing on growth, innovation and student well-being in 2026

ALESSANDRO COMMISSO
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As the new school year gets underway, the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board (SWLSB) is entering a period of transition and renewal marked by new leadership, growing enrolment in several regions, and a commitment to addressing emerging challenges such as artificial intelligence and cellphone use in schools.

In an interview with Chairman James Di Sano and newly appointed Director General Florence Delorme, both leaders emphasized a common theme: keeping students at the centre of every decision while preparing the board for the future.

New leadership and a clear vision

One of the most significant developments for SWLSB this year is the appointment of Florence Delorme as Director General, effective July 9, 2026. Delorme brings more than 25 years of experience within the organization and is well known across the board, having served in several senior leadership positions, most recently as Director of Student Affairs and School Organization.

For Di Sano, Delorme's appointment represents continuity and stability at a time when the board continues to evolve.

"She's occupied many, many significant posts within the organization," said Di Sano, noting that her extensive experience will help foster strong collaboration between governance and management.

For Delorme, however, the focus is less on her appointment and more on the board's mission. She said her first message to staff and administrators this year has been to return to the fundamental purpose of education.

"We really want to come back to the basics of why we are here," Delorme said.

That purpose, she explained, is centred on three priorities: student success, well-being and learning, a fitting "SWL" acronym that mirrors the initials of the school board itself. Delorme emphasized, however, that achieving those goals depends just as much on supporting the staff who work with students every day.

"The more we support the success, well-being and learning of our staff, the more impactful that will be for our students," she said.

According to Delorme, that message has been consistently reinforced during meetings with management teams, head office staff and elected commissioners throughout the start of the school year.

Investing in teachers

One of the board's major initiatives this fall has been a renewed focus on professional development for teachers.

Delorme described the initiative as the first large-scale pedagogical professional development program organized by the board in many years. The effort brought together hundreds of educators from across the territory before the school year was fully underway.

The first event took place on Sept. 18 at Laurentian Regional High School in Lachute, where nearly 300 teachers participated in workshops and training sessions. A second event at Rosemère High School attracted approximately 600 teachers.

The initiative was developed through collaboration between the

pedagogical services department, head office personnel and the teachers' union.

Delorme said the goal is twofold: to provide educators with high-quality training while also creating opportunities for networking and collaboration between teachers who work in different schools and regions.

The board hopes to make the professional development days an annual tradition.

"It's really teacher-focused," Delorme said. "This is us as an organization investing in our employees."

As schools continue adapting to evolving educational realities, board leaders believe investing in staff development is one of the most effective ways to improve student outcomes.

Regional growth brings new opportunities

Another major story this year is enrolment growth in parts of the board's territory.

While English-language school boards across Quebec continue to face enrolment challenges due to eligibility restrictions, SWLSB is seeing encouraging growth in several of its regional sectors.

Di Sano highlighted growing student populations in both the Laurentians and Lanaudière. According to the board, enrolment has increased by approximately 160 students in the Laurentians and about 300 students in Lanaudière compared with last year.

"We're growing in the regions, and the numbers don't lie," Di Sano said.

That growth presents both opportunities and challenges. Increased enrolment creates greater demand for facilities and services, but it also strengthens the case for future investments in infrastructure.

Di Sano said the board intends to continue investing in schools located in rapidly growing communities to ensure they can meet future demand.

"It speaks volumes to the growing communities in the regions and the opportunity that it poses for us as an organization," he said.

Delorme noted that while enrolment remains relatively stable overall, English-language boards must work harder than their French-language counterparts to attract students because not every child residing within their territory qualifies to attend English schools.

Despite those challenges, the continued growth in the Laurentians and Lanaudière regions provides optimism for the years ahead.

Finding the right balance with AI

Like school boards across the country, SWLSB is also grappling with the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence.

Both Delorme and Di Sano acknowledged that AI has already become part of everyday life in education and that the focus should be on managing it responsibly rather than attempting to resist it.

"AI is there. It's not going away," Delorme said.

She explained that the Ministry of Education requires school boards to develop guidelines and parameters governing AI use. While some schools, particularly high schools, have already begun implementing local approaches, she said more work remains to be done.

SWLSB is also collaborating with other English-language school boards to develop a common framework that will help students and staff use AI effectively and ethically.

The board's approach is largely centred on education rather than restriction. Delorme believes AI can be a powerful learning tool if used properly, but schools must also ensure students continue developing essential skills.

A key concern is preserving critical thinking.



Chairman of the SWLSB James di Sano and newly appointed Director General Florence Delorme in the Council of Commissioners room.

While much of the public conversation around AI focuses on fear and potential risks, Delorme said the more important question is how educators can leverage the technology to strengthen student learning rather than weaken it.

Di Sano echoed that sentiment. He acknowledged that AI is already being used by teachers and employees throughout the organization to improve efficiency.

"Teachers are using it. Staff are using it," he said.

At the same time, he warned that educators must remain mindful of the ways AI could potentially undermine critical thinking and independent judgment if students become overly reliant on it.

Developing a clear action plan to guide AI use across the board therefore remains a priority throughout the coming year.

Cellphone ban showing positive results

The board is also reporting encouraging results from the province's cellphone restrictions in schools.

The policy, introduced by Quebec's Ministry of Education, limits students' ability to use cellphones during the school day. While enforcement initially presented challenges, both Delorme and Di Sano said schools have largely adapted and students appear to understand the expectations.

According to Delorme, one of the most noticeable outcomes has been an increase in face-to-face interaction among students.

Without constant access to their phones, students are spending more time talking with one another and engaging in school life. She also noted that students appear more physically active during breaks and lunch periods.

Another positive effect has been a reduction in social media-related conflicts during the school day.

While some students still attempt to circumvent the rules, Delorme said the majority have accepted the restrictions and adjusted their habits accordingly.

Di Sano offered similar observations and praised the ministry's decision.

"I applaud the initiative of the Ministry of Education," he said.

For him, the biggest benefit is that the policy encourages the social aspect of education.

"It's optimized human interaction," he said. "The goal of education is socialization."

Eyes on the future

As SWLSB moves through the 2026-27 school year, its leadership appears focused on balancing tradition with innovation. The arrival of a new director general, ongoing regional growth, significant investments in teacher development, and a measured approach to AI all point toward a board seeking to strengthen its foundations while preparing for future challenges.

At the same time, early results from the cellphone ban suggest that some of the simplest policy changes can have a noticeable impact on student life.

Jewelry store heist at Place Rosemère ends in arrests

NEWSFIRST MULTIMEDIA
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Tens of thousands of dollars worth of jewelry was stolen during a brazen smash-and-grab robbery at Place Rosemère. The heist, allegedly carried out by a group of young suspects, was completed in just 80 seconds.

The incident unfolded on September 21 at Bijouterie Ricci when several masked individuals made their way directly to the store. Armed with hammers, they shattered display cases and grabbed merchandise before making a quick escape. Security footage and videos captured by bystanders documented much of the robbery as it unfolded.

Pepper spray was reportedly used during the attack, affecting several people nearby and prompting assistance from emergency

responders. Some merchants reportedly locked themselves inside their stores while shoppers moved away from the area for safety. Witness-recorded videos circulating online show the suspects smashing showcases while onlookers watched from a distance.

The robbery triggered a major police operation. The Régie intermunicipale de police Thérèse-De Blainville was assisted by officers from Saint-Eustache, Montreal and the Sûreté du Québec. Police located the suspects after they allegedly abandoned their vehicle and attempted to flee on foot toward High School Jean-Jacques-Rousseau in Boisbriand.

On September 22, police confirmed the arrest of four suspects, including three minors aged 13, 15 and 17, along with a 19-year-old man. A fifth suspect remains at large as the investigation continues. Authorities also reported recovering the stolen jewelry.

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Quebec civil court judge forces government to issue bilingual election information cards

1.6 million English-speaking Quebecers 'deserve respect,' says Task Force's Andrew Caddell

MARTIN C. BARRY

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A provincial lobby group that promotes bilingualism in Quebec is applauding a decision by judge Sylvain Lussier to force bilingual election information cards to be sent out before the October 5 provincial election.

The Task Force on Linguistic Policy has been using legal challenges, public meetings, rallies, expert panels and submissions to governments and the courts to promote bilingualism, inclusion and the protection of linguistic rights across Quebec.

Task Force president Andrew Caddell pointed out the organization was a leader in the bilingual information card issue, which called for an injunction against the decision by Élections Québec to issue all information in French.

Task Force led case

"Congratulations to lawyers Doug Mitchell and Eric Malloff, who brought the initiative to court," Caddell said in a statement issued last week, while noting that Task Force vice president Geoffrey Chambers was the plaintiff in the case.

"We have been calling this decision voter suppression from the very beginning, and we have been joined by commentators and public officials across Quebec and Canada," added Caddell.

He said the decision sends a message to Premier Christine Fréchette, French Language Minister François Roberge and French Language Commissioner Benoît Dubreuil, "who deliberately prevented bilingual information," Caddell maintained.

"There are 1.6 million English-speaking Quebecers who deserve respect," said Caddell. "As citizens and taxpayers, they should be treated equally with every other Quebecer."

Vulnerable Anglophones

Although the CAQ government had said a QR code in the election

information would be satisfactory for English-speaking Quebecers, Caddell responded:

"While the vast majority of Anglophone Quebecers are bilingual, many who are not are the most vulnerable: the elderly, indigenous people, visible minorities, the rural poor and people with physical and mental challenges. Many do not have smart phones and are not capable of using a QR code."

In a phone interview late last week with Newsfirst Multimedia, Caddell said what astonished him most about the situation was the CAQ government's determination to ignore Élections Québec's recommendation that the English-language text be included in the pre-election materials.

CAQ ignored Élections Québec

"They first started writing to them in 2023," he said regarding the provincial election office's intervention. "And the last letter was the eighth of April 2025, which is when they last wrote to them and they continued to say no."

While noting that Élections Québec is supposed to be an autonomous body at arm's length from the provincial government, Caddell said the CAQ government passed Bill 96 (which he dismissed as unconstitutional), making Élections Québec subject to the reform of Bill 101, Quebec's original French language protection legislation.

"So, Élections Québec had to ask the minister if they could get an exemption from the Charter of the French Language to do what they've always done in the past – and which is in line with Section 133 of the constitution and Section 3 of the Charter – where one affirms English-language rights and the other affirms voting rights."

Bill 96 challenge still in play

The Task Force currently has a major court case still in motion to challenge Bill 96. They are hoping to be allowed to invoke a legal principle set by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2016 when the "Jordan rule" established a framework for numerical ceilings to go to trial within a reasonable time after charges are laid to the

conclusion of a case.

"We submitted our brief on January 31 more than two years ago and we have yet to hear from the Quebec government as to how they are going to respond," Caddell said. "Like that is a delay that is far too great. And the issue is, I think what is happening is they're waiting until the decision on Bill 21 on the notwithstanding clause has been decided by the Supreme Court."

Notwithstanding 'irrelevant,' Task Force claims

"But our case shouldn't be determined on the basis of the notwithstanding clause, because we argued that the notwithstanding clause is actually in some ways irrelevant to the issues that we're raising," he continued. "Because we're raising issues about different parts of the constitution, and we're also saying that the charter itself and the notwithstanding clause should be put aside, because the charter itself does not change any laws that already exist."

Caddell said the Task Force's view is that the government should have given them a court date sooner, "but we're still waiting." He said the Task Force has no intention of giving up on the issue until they've exhausted all legal avenues.

Task Force on Linguistic Policy president Andrew Caddell said they were elated upon learning last week of a Quebec Court judge's decision ordering the Quebec government and Élections Québec to print and circulate English-language pre-election explanatory materials after they had initially declined to do so.





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OPINION & Editorial



Quebec election 2026 contenders show disrespect for province's Anglo voters

While Premier Christine Fréchette was dealt a humiliating blow late last week when a Quebec Superior Court judge ruled the incumbent CAQ government must prepare bilingual voter reminder cards for the October 5 election, this chapter in recent history should serve as a reminder to the province's English-speaking community of just how marginalized they are becoming in Quebec.

In most developed nations throughout the world, the carefully regulated organization of elections is regarded as one of the benchmarks of a civilized society.

It's notable that even in communist or totalitarian nations, it has always been considered important to hold elections with at least a semblance of fairness even when they are rigged.

And even though Quebec's 2026 elections are far from fixed, Premier Fréchette's response to the voting card issue — which was in itself a direct result of legislation her party passed while in office — only serves to further demonstrate the disregard the outgoing CAQ government has for its English-speaking constituents.

The unilingual mailouts were a result of language law reforms by the Coalition Avenir Québec government. The Quebec Court ruling temporarily suspended part of the language law. Despite this, Fréchette herself had gone on record to defend the unilingual mailings, saying French is the sole official language of the province.

Last week, Judge Sylvain Lussier told the government that it had no choice but to prepare bilingual reminder cards to mail to voters ahead

of the vote. Now, however, Élections Québec doesn't have enough time to send out English versions of the registration notice and voter's guide before the election.

The legal decision came after a hearing for a lawsuit against the government and the elections directorate over the French-only mailouts. However, Judge Lussier ruled only on part of the challenge, granting the demand for a provisional interlocutory injunction.

"The evidence indicates a serious risk that a large number of anglophone seniors will be unable to exercise their right to vote due to a lack of understandable information," Lussier wrote.

His ruling did not include the English version of the registration notices or the voter's guides, as he believed it would be unrealistic and extremely costly to force the government to send bilingual versions of these documents.

Geoffrey Chambers — a past president of the former Quebec Community Groups Network (now known as TALQ) who had applied for the ruling — said the judgment "makes it very clear that the rights of the community have been compromised."

In the meantime, the English election notification cards issue was not the only problem relating to language that surfaced during the 2026 campaign.

Let's not forget — especially four years from now when National Assembly candidates come around seeking votes again — that any hope of a televised English-language debate got shut down early in the current election process when the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) and Parti

Québécois (PQ) declined to take part in an English debate, even though at least two other parties had agreed to participate.

A consortium of Quebec-based media, comprising CBC Quebec, CTV News Montreal, CJAD 800, Global Montreal, CityNews Montreal and The Montreal Gazette, had invited the leaders of the five main Quebec political parties to a 90-minute English-language debate, which had been set to take place on Sept. 24.

While the Conservative Party of Quebec and Québec solidaire accepted, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) and Parti Québécois (PQ) did not. For their part, the Quebec Liberal Party said they would only participate in a debate if all five also agreed, which admittedly became a convenient excuse to say no.

Even though Quebec provincial election English-language debates are not a firmly established tradition (the first actually took place prior to the 2018 election, while another was called off in 2022 when the CAQ and PQ declined to participate), these latest developments don't augur well for relations between future Quebec governments and their English-speaking constituents.

It's the kind of alienation that may end up driving votes from the province's Anglophone community to parties once considered fringe — like the Canadian Party and the Conservative Party of Quebec — who at least have shown themselves to be completely open to fully recognizing the importance Quebec's English-speaking residents.

— Martin C. Barry —

PRINTED MEDIA IN PERIL

AN ELECTORAL ISSUE QUÉBEC CANNOT IGNORE

As the provincial election approaches, we wish, on behalf of a coalition representing Québec's printed media, to draw your attention to a fundamental question: the place Québec intends to give its culture, its information ecosystem, and the media that sustain them — both in the debates ahead and in the years that will follow.

The reform of the recycling and curbside collection system has created inconsistencies and anomalies that must be clearly understood: the fewer printed media in circulation, the higher the fees imposed on them for material recovery. In other words, the recycling tax hits hardest the titles whose circulation is declining — a mechanism that directly threatens the financial stability of printed media, and in some cases, their very survival. This same logic also affects Québec's entire printed culture, including books, which have now become collateral victims of a system that does not measure value in tonnage.

Beyond this technical issue lies a cultural one. Newspapers, magazines, and weekly publications are far more than physical objects; they are essential carriers of cultural and journalistic content. They are indispensable to protecting our language, our values, and the dissemination of reliable, local information. The attachment of Quebecers to printed formats remains deep and genuine. Millions of citizens continue to rely on them

daily — not only by choice, but by necessity, particularly in regions with limited digital infrastructure, among older citizens, and in households where connectivity remains constrained. For these readers, the disappearance of a regional newspaper, a weekly, or a local magazine is not the loss of a product; it is the loss of a cultural space, a source of information, and a sense of belonging.

Printed media also represent one of the last spaces where culture and information can fully express themselves, without being diluted by the flood of foreign content that dominates today's digital environment. Guided by proven editorial practices, they offer a structured framework that strengthens the quality of public debate and helps combat misinformation — a growing democratic concern, especially during an election period.

It is precisely because content and medium are inseparable that the current situation cannot be ignored. What our magazines, newspapers, and weeklies contain cannot be treated as mere residual material. Unlike single-use packaging, whose purpose ends the moment it is opened, the paper that carries our printed media is inseparable from the cultural and journalistic content it conveys — content produced here, for the benefit of all Quebecers. This principle extends beyond printed media: wherever written culture exists, its medium cannot be treated as simple waste.

A reform that weakens what took decades to build

The recent reform of the recycling system undermines what Québec's printed media have spent decades building. By imposing an everincreasing financial burden, the new regime directly threatens the sustainability of numerous titles across Québec — and with them, an irreplaceable part of our cultural and democratic life.

The upcoming electoral debates offer an opportunity to reaffirm what Québec chooses to be: a society that protects its culture, values its information, and refuses to allow its democratic and cultural space to shrink quietly. Where do our party leaders stand on this issue?

The coalition of printed media includes, among others:

Le Devoir, the Journal de Montréal, the Journal de Québec, The Globe and Mail, The Gazette, L'Actualité, Ricardo, as well as the publications of TVA Publications, PraticoPratiques, KO Média, Bayard Presse Canada, Publications BLD, and Naitre et grandir. The Laval News, The North Shore News, Nouvelles Parc Extension News, and Greek Canadian News-TA NEA. It also brings together the 53 members of the Association québécoise des éditeurs de magazines (AQEM), the 136 members of Hebdom Québec, and RecycleMédias.

U.S./Canada trade war puts over 50,000 Canadian small businesses at risk

Additional product bans loom, Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates

MARTIN C. BARRY

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According to new estimates released in recent weeks by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 53,112 businesses are directly impacted by either U.S. tariffs, Canadian counter-tariffs or both.

Of that total, 13,160 are exporters, while 45,414 are importers.

Small business excluded

"While government has made a few important and welcome changes to the main tariff supports, the programs continue to exclude about half of the small business community," says Corinne Pohlmann, executive vice-president for advocacy at the Toronto-headquartered CFIB.

"We have been telling government that the counter-tariffs would have a far broader impact than the U.S. tariffs," she continues.

"Programs that only help a few thousand businesses are unacceptable when tens of thousands need support," says Pohlmann, adding that the recent announcement that some Canadian goods will be outright banned from U.S. import at the end of September only underscores the need to get support ASAP.

Small business relief

With that in mind, the CFIB is proposing three important measures:

A dedicated Small Business Tariff Relief (SBTR) program, where impacted exporters and importers who can provide direct evidence they paid the tariffs directly, or adjusted prices to absorb part or all of the tariff, would be eligible to receive initial tariff relief up to \$70,000 CAD.

An SME Desk for Tariff Remissions to speed up decisions on eliminating Canadian retaliatory tariffs if there are major negative impacts on the industry or if alternatives to the U.S. product are not readily available.

Immediate tax relief for all small businesses in the form of a Small Business Corporate Tax Rate cut from 9% to 6%, retroactive to January 1, 2026, and an increase to the Small Business Deduction threshold from \$500,000 to \$700,000 with future indexation to inflation.

"The Regional Tariff Response Initiative Programs have standardized eligibility criteria and reduced their access thresholds down to \$1 million, but it doesn't go far enough," said Pohlmann.

Direct support for small players

"A \$1-million threshold will still exclude a huge number of businesses. We need a simple, direct support program to help small businesses on the U.S. and Canadian tariff lists in addition to broad-based tax relief to help all small firms that will be hurt by the trade war."

In an interview with Newsfirst Multimedia, Ryan Mallough, vice-president for legislative affairs and communications at the CFIB, was asked whether the CFIB foresees the current tariff war between Canada and the U.S. being toned down in the next two years or sooner as President Donald Trump's time in office is projected to end in January 2029.

"First and foremost, really and truly, I think we hope it doesn't take two years," he said. "I hope we're able to reach some kind of deal well

before then." He suggested that the date many Canadians and Americans are now eagerly anticipating comes in November when the U.S. midterm elections take place.

Shifting political climate in U.S.

Historically, midterm elections often see the president's party lose seats in the U.S. Congress, and frequently see the president's opposite-party opponents gain control of one or both houses of Congress.

"If the House or the Senate changes hands or both of them change hands, what that does can change the administration's tenor or their ability to invoke things," said Mallough. "So, the first potential exit ramp is probably over the next couple of months."

After that, he said it will be a question of whether federal Minister Responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade Dominic Leblanc and his U.S. counterpart Jamieson Greer continue to talk and "force the conversation to become more pressing on both sides, and do we see something happen there."

No signs of short-term relief

"Overall, we hope that the sides are still communicating and talking," Mallough continued. "You know, would I expect a deal imminently? I don't think so. But, as we've experienced throughout the trade war, things tend to move very quickly in both directions."

"So, it would both be a surprise and not a surprise to hear that there is a deal, you know, in the works. But at the same time, I think a lot of people are making the calculus that in two years, constitutionally there has to be a change in the presidency, you know, and that's sort of the long end of the timeline on that side."



Ryan Mallough, vice-president for legislative affairs and communications at the CFIB, says there is a growing belief that midterm elections in the U.S. in November may help lead to more positive developments in the tariff war between Canada and the U.S. (Photo: Courtesy of Canadian Federation of Independent Business)



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Residents press council on development and Highway 640 issues

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The September 14 meeting of Rosemère Town Council opened with an appeal for civility as councillors prepared for another evening of debate on some of the municipality's most contentious issues.

Councillor Annick Lemelin-Lagacé began the meeting by reminding residents of the need for respectful conduct in council chambers, a message that reflected the increasingly tense atmosphere seen at several recent meetings. "I'd just like to take a moment to remind everyone of the rules of decorum to help ensure we have a respectful and productive council meeting," she said, adding that "insults, threats, and personal attacks will not be tolerated."

The call for decorum proved especially relevant as discussions later turned to a proposed development project, the Hydro-Québec clearing along Highway 640, and growing traffic concerns caused by highway construction.

Proposed project raises questions about demolition



Former mayor Eric Westram addresses council during the public question period, raising concerns and sharing his perspective on issues affecting local residents. (Photo: Alessandro Commisso, The North Shore News)



The City Council meets during the September 14 council meeting, where residents and elected officials gathered to discuss municipal issues and hear public questions and comments. (Photo: Alessandro Commisso, The North Shore News)

One of the evening's most debated moments came during discussion surrounding agenda item 5.4, a development proposal that would require the demolition of an existing residence if it ultimately proceeds.

Former Rosemère mayor Eric Westram sought clarification from council, asking whether the project would result in the house being demolished. Mayor Marie-Elaine Pitre confirmed that it would, responding that "if this project sees the light of day, yes it will be."

The answer immediately sparked criticism from Westram, who expressed surprise that elected officials who had previously opposed demolitions appeared willing to support a proposal requiring the destruction of a home. While Mayor Pitre insisted that questions be directed through the chair, the exchange highlighted a broader debate over how Rosemère should balance new development with the preservation of existing neighbourhoods.

Highway 640 clearing remains a major concern

The issue that generated the most discussion throughout the evening was Hydro-Québec's vegetation clearing along Highway 640.

Resident Chantal Trudel noted that the work had significantly altered the landscape, saying the clearing had "opened up the area, providing visibility to the highway and easier pedestrian access." Other residents, however, focused on what they believe has been lost as a result of the project.

Among the most vocal critics was Westram, who argued that homeowners are required to replace trees removed from their own properties while a substantial section of vegetation was allowed to disappear along the highway corridor. He contended that the clearing eliminated an important visual and acoustic barrier, leaving nearby residents exposed to greater levels of traffic noise.

Questioning what studies had been conducted following the work, Westram pointedly remarked that "not only was the visual barrier eliminated, but the level of noise has become extremely difficult to tolerate." He later distilled the concerns of many Highway 640 residents into a single question: "What will you do for the people that live along the 640?"

Mayor Pitre declined to discuss the matter in detail, explaining that the issue is now subject to legal proceedings. She stated that the municipality had received a formal notice and, as a result, would no longer be commenting publicly on the file.

Resident Ryan Bujold, who has been active in the push for a sound barrier, asked council for an update regarding visits made by municipal representatives to assess the impacts of Hydro-Québec's work on his property.

Bujold questioned what followed from the assessment and why neighbouring homes had not been visited. Mayor Pitre responded that she did not have that information, adding that she was "absolutely not responsible for the management of the city's employees."



Mayor Marie-Elaine Pitre chairs the September 14 council meeting as council members discuss items on the evening's agenda. (Photo: Alessandro Commisso, The North Shore News)

The exchange appeared to leave many attendees puzzled as murmurs could be heard throughout the room. Several residents expressed surprise at the response, questioning how the mayor was unaware of the status of an issue that had generated significant public attention.

Roland-Durand residents report speeding problems

Construction-related impacts from Highway 640 were also raised elsewhere in the meeting. Trudel told council that many motorists are now using Roland-Durand Boulevard as a shortcut around construction zones, resulting in heavier traffic, increased noise and speeding in a residential area.

According to Trudel, vehicles are frequently travelling between 60 and 70 km/h through a neighbourhood where many children live. She asked what could be done to improve safety, including the possibility of greater police presence or traffic-calming measures.

Mayor Pitre responded that residents can submit requests to the Police Board for additional enforcement and noted that monitoring is already being carried out by the regional police service.

Concerns remain ahead of future meetings

While council completed its regular business, the strongest moments of the evening came during public question period, where issues related to development, quality of life and Highway 640 dominated the discussion.

The meeting also took place against the backdrop of several broader initiatives highlighted by Mayor Marie-Elaine Pitre in a video released the following day. Among the priorities she identified were plans to convert municipal land into off-market housing, a partnership with UQAM's Research Chair in Urban Biodiversity, the annual contribution to Rosemère's environmental protection reserve, an update to the municipality's cultural policy, and participation in the North Shore Mobility Pact. While these topics generated less discussion than the issues raised during question period, they remain key components of council's vision for the months ahead.

From concerns about a proposed demolition to ongoing frustration over Hydro-Québec's clearing operations and traffic impacts linked to highway construction, residents made it clear that several key municipal issues remain unresolved.

Despite the meeting opening with a reminder about decorum, the intensity of the exchanges demonstrated just how strongly many residents feel about the direction of these files.

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Get to know your candidates before the Oct. 5 election

ALESSANDRO COMMISSO

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Quebec election season is right around the corner, and this campaign is shaping up to be one of the most competitive in recent memory. Political observers have compared the current race to the 2007 election, when Jean Charest's Liberals held on to power in a fractured National Assembly ahead of Mario Dumont's Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) and André Boisclair's Parti Québécois.

Here on the North Shore, many familiar faces are once again asking voters for their support. However, shifting political winds and changing voter priorities could make for some interesting results. For this guide, we'll be focusing on three key ridings: Groulx, Deux-Montagnes and Blainville, all of which have traditionally been strongholds for the Coalition Avenir Québec.

To understand the political landscape today, it's important to look at how the CAQ came to dominate these ridings. Formed by François Legault and Charles Sirois in 2011 before officially becoming a political party later that year, the CAQ positioned itself as an alternative to the province's traditional Liberal versus Parti Québécois divide. Following its merger with the ADQ in 2012, the party attracted many nationalist and centre-right voters and steadily expanded its reach across Quebec.

That growth culminated in a historic victory in 2018, when the CAQ formed government for the first time. The party followed that up with another decisive win in 2022, cementing its place as Quebec's dominant political force.

This year, however, the political landscape appears far less predictable. Recent polling and projection models suggest the Parti Québécois has emerged as the province's frontrunner, while the CAQ, Liberals, Québec solidaire and Conservatives continue battling for support in what could become Quebec's most unpredictable election in nearly two decades.

Before getting into the individual ridings, here's a quick look at the major parties competing in the election:

- Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ), led by Charles Milliard
- Parti Québécois (PQ), led by Paul St-Pierre Plamondon
- Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), led by Christine Fréchette
- Québec solidaire (QS), co-led by Ruba Ghazal and Sol Zanetti
- Conservative Party of Quebec (PCQ), led by Éric Duhaime

Groulx

The riding of Groulx, which includes Boisbriand, Rosemère and Sainte-Thérèse, has long been considered one of the CAQ's strongest footholds on the North Shore. However, recent polling and projection models suggest the riding is now far more competitive than many observers expected at the start of the campaign. Current projections show a close race between the CAQ and the Parti Québécois, with the outcome far from certain.

Much of the attention remains focused on Éric Girard. Quebec's finance minister and one of the CAQ government's most recognizable figures, Girard is seeking another mandate. He will face Julie Tourangeau for the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ), Marie-Noëlle Aubertin for Québec solidaire (QS), Marie-Claude Sarrazin for the Parti Québécois (PQ), and Ariane Desrochers for the Conservative Party of Quebec (PCQ).

While the provincial race appears tighter than it has in years, Girard's personal profile could still provide the CAQ with an advantage that many of its candidates elsewhere do not enjoy. That is what makes Groulx particularly interesting. The riding offers one of the clearest tests of whether strong local incumbents can withstand the broader challenges currently facing the CAQ.

If the CAQ struggles to hold a riding represented by one of its most prominent ministers, it could signal deeper problems for the party across suburban Quebec. Conversely, a Girard victory would suggest that local candidate strength and incumbency remain important factors even as voter preferences shift province-wide.

Although the race remains highly competitive, current projection models continue to give Girard and the CAQ a slight edge. The fact that Groulx is now being described by some forecasters as a PQ-CAQ battleground rather than a safe CAQ seat highlights just how dramatically Quebec's political landscape has changed heading into the Oct. 5 vote. Current projections give the CAQ roughly a 63 per cent chance of holding the riding, compared with 37 per cent for the PQ.

Deux-Montagnes

Of the three ridings featured here, Deux-Montagnes may be the most difficult to predict.

For the first time in years, voters will head to the polls without seeing long-time MNA Benoit Charette on the ballot. Charette first won the seat in 2008 under the Parti Québécois banner before later joining the CAQ and becoming a prominent member of government. Replacing a politician with that level of local recognition is never easy.

The CAQ officially unveiled Christine Maestracci as its candidate on Aug. 23. She will face Marc Allaire for the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ), Guillaume Ducharme for Québec solidaire (QS), Linda Vaillant for the Parti Québécois (PQ), and Samuel Lévesque for the Conservative Party of Quebec (PCQ).

Unlike Groulx, where voters are choosing whether to return a prominent incumbent, Deux-Montagnes is an open-seat race. Historically, those are often the most unpredictable contests because voters are evaluating new candidates rather than an established MNA's record.

For opposition parties, this represents one of the best opportunities on the North Shore to make a breakthrough. If any of these three ridings is poised to produce a surprise result on election night, Deux-Montagnes may very well be it.

Current projections suggest the Parti Québécois has the upper hand. Depending on the forecasting model, the PQ is given between roughly 73 and 86 per cent odds of capturing the riding. For a constituency long associated with Benoit Charette and the CAQ, a PQ victory would represent a significant political shift on the North Shore.

Blainville

Blainville is shaping up to be one of the North Shore's most competitive races and an important test of whether the Parti Québécois' resurgence is translating into support in the suburbs north of Montreal.

The riding, which includes Blainville, Boisdés-Filion and Lorraine, is currently represented by Mario Laframboise of the CAQ. A veteran politician who previously served with

the ADQ before joining the CAQ, Laframboise is seeking another mandate this fall.

Joining the race are Sébastien Daoust for the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ), Nadine Le Gal for the Parti Québécois (PQ), Pascale Quévillon for the Conservative Party of Quebec (PCQ), and Louis Piette for Québec solidaire (QS).

For the CAQ, Blainville is a riding it cannot afford to lose if it hopes to maintain its dominance on the North Shore. For the PQ, however, the riding presents a significant opportunity. Blainville has historically been receptive to nationalist parties, making it exactly the type of riding Paul St-Pierre Plamondon's party will be targeting if it hopes to increase its seat count.

Recent projection models suggest the riding has become a genuine toss-up between the CAQ and the PQ. While Laframboise's incumbency and local profile remain important assets for the CAQ, the PQ's province-wide momentum has put Nadine Le Gal in contention for a breakthrough victory.

Current projections give the PQ a modest edge, with most models placing the party's chances of victory at roughly 59 per cent compared with about 40 per cent for the CAQ. That makes Blainville one of the most important battlegrounds on the North Shore. A PQ victory would provide further evidence that the party's resurgence is extending beyond its traditional strongholds and into suburban Quebec. Conversely, a CAQ hold would suggest the party remains resilient in key off-island ridings despite its province-wide challenges.

Either way, Blainville is shaping up to be one of the most closely watched races on election night.

What to watch for

While these ridings are all located on the North Shore, each tells a different story.

In Groulx, voters will decide whether Éric Girard's personal popularity can withstand a weakening CAQ brand and a surprisingly competitive challenge from the Parti Québécois.

In Deux-Montagnes, the departure of Benoit Charette creates a rare open-seat contest that now appears to favour the PQ, though the campaign could still shift during its final days.

And in Blainville, the results may help answer a question being asked across Quebec: is the Parti Québécois' resurgence real, or is it simply a polling phenomenon?

The North Shore has long played an important role in shaping Quebec's political landscape. After dominating much of the region in 2018 and 2022, the CAQ enters this election facing a very different environment. Meanwhile, the PQ is looking to build on renewed momentum, the Liberals are attempting to reconnect with suburban voters, and the Conservatives are hoping to increase their presence in Quebec politics.

The answers will begin to emerge on Oct. 5. Until then, candidates across Groulx, Deux-Montagnes and Blainville will be making their case to voters one doorstep at a time.

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ELECTIONS 2026



As Quebecers prepare to head to the polls on October 5, 2026, the province's televised leaders' debates have emerged as the defining events of the election campaign. In an era increasingly dominated by social media clips, campaign advertising, and carefully choreographed political appearances, the debates remain one of the few occasions when party leaders must step beyond prepared talking points and engage directly with their opponents before a province-wide audience.

For voters trying to decide who should lead Quebec through the next four years, the debates provide a unique opportunity to compare competing visions, leadership styles, and policy priorities. They offer a rare political test where candidates are evaluated not only on what they promise but also on how they react under pressure, defend their records, and communicate their ideas in real time.

This year's election comes at a particularly significant moment in Quebec politics. Questions surrounding healthcare, housing affordability, economic uncertainty, immigration, climate policy, and the future of Quebec identity dominate public discussion. At the same time, voters are being asked to assess a new generation of political leadership, making the debates even more consequential than usual.

A new political landscape

For the first time in nearly a decade, Quebec's political landscape is evolving under new leadership. Premier Christine Fréchette, leading the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), enters the election campaign seeking a third consecutive mandate for her party while establishing herself as a leader in her own right.

As the head of the incumbent government, Fréchette carries both the advantages and burdens of office. She can point to the CAQ's record on economic growth, infrastructure investments, and French-language protection. However, she must also answer for continuing concerns about access to healthcare, housing shortages, and growing frustration among voters who wonder whether the government has accomplished enough after eight years in power.



Challenging her is Charles Milliard, the relatively new leader of the Quebec Liberal Party. For many Quebecers, the debates represent their first extended opportunity to evaluate whether Milliard possesses the stature and political skills necessary to become premier. The Liberals are attempting to rebuild after several disappointing election results and present themselves as a credible alternative government capable of reconnecting with voters across the province.

Meanwhile, Paul St-Pierre Plamondon and the Parti Québécois continue their effort to transform renewed public interest into electoral success. The PQ leader has positioned himself as both a defender of Quebec's identity and a proponent of sovereignty, while simultaneously addressing day-to-day concerns such as affordability, economic development, and public services.

On the progressive side of the political spectrum, Ruba Ghazal and Québec solidaire aim to expand the party's appeal beyond its traditional support base. By focusing on housing, climate change, social equity, and public investment, Ghazal hopes to convince voters that Québec solidaire offers the boldest vision for tackling contemporary challenges.

Finally, Éric Duhaime and the Conservative Party of Quebec continue to present themselves as an alternative to what they describe as Quebec's political establishment. Duhaime's message of lower taxes, greater individual freedom, and a reduced role for government has attracted voters seeking a different approach to provincial governance.

Why debates still matter

Political debates rarely determine election outcomes on their own. Most voters have already formed impressions of parties and leaders long before debate night. Yet debates continue to play a critical role because they reinforce, challenge, or reshape those impressions.

Unlike campaign commercials, which are polished and scripted, debates place leaders in an unpredictable environment. They must answer difficult questions, respond to criticism, and challenge opponents without the support of advisors, speechwriters, or carefully controlled settings.

This allows voters to evaluate qualities that cannot easily be measured through campaign literature. Confidence, competence, authenticity, temperament, and communication skills often become just as important as policy proposals. Voters frequently ask themselves a simple question while watching a debate: Who looks and sounds like a premier?

For undecided voters, that question can be decisive.

Political history is filled with examples of leaders who elevated their campaigns through strong debate performances and others whose momentum was weakened by one poor evening. In a competitive election, even a modest shift in public opinion can alter the results in dozens of closely contested ridings.

Healthcare: the defining issue

If there is one subject almost guaranteed to dominate the debates, it is healthcare.

Across Quebec, concerns remain widespread over access to family doctors, overcrowded emergency rooms, shortages of nurses and specialists, and lengthy wait times for medical procedures. Healthcare consistently ranks among the most important

issues facing voters and remains a source of frustration for many families.

Each party has offered proposals aimed at improving the system. The governing CAQ argues that reforms already underway need additional time to deliver results. Opposition parties counter that deeper structural changes are necessary and that Quebecers deserve faster improvements.

Because healthcare touches nearly every household, debate performances on this issue may prove more influential than discussions on any other topic.

Housing and affordability

Closely following healthcare is the issue of housing affordability.

The housing crisis has become one of the defining challenges of modern Quebec. Rising rents, escalating home prices, and insufficient housing construction have placed immense pressure on young families, newcomers, seniors, and low-income residents.

Whether in Montreal, Laval, Quebec City, or smaller regional centres, voters increasingly want immediate action.

The debates offer an opportunity for leaders to explain not only what they would do but how they would do it. Promises to build more housing are popular, but voters are also asking practical questions. How will projects be financed? How quickly can homes be built? Can government remove barriers slowing development?

Candidates who can provide convincing answers may gain valuable political support.

The cost-of-living challenge

Although inflation has moderated compared with its recent peaks, the cost-of-living crisis remains a reality for many Quebec households.

Food prices, utility bills, transportation costs, insurance premiums, and mortgage payments continue to strain family budgets. Even voters who have traditionally focused on other issues increasingly view affordability as a central concern.

Throughout the campaign, every party has attempted to position itself as the strongest advocate for middle-class and working families. Tax reductions, targeted assistance programs, and economic growth strategies have all featured prominently in campaign announcements.

The debates provide a forum where these competing approaches can be compared directly, allowing voters to determine which proposals appear most realistic and financially sustainable.

Immigration, integration, and demographic change

Few issues generate more emotional discussion in Quebec than immigration.

The province faces a complex balancing act. Businesses and public institutions continue to face labour shortages, creating pressure for increased immigration. At the same time, many Quebecers remain concerned about the integration of newcomers and the protection of French language and culture.

These competing priorities have produced significant political divisions.

▶ Continued on page 9

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ELECTIONS 2026



◀ Continued from page 8

Some parties emphasize economic necessity and demographic realities. Others focus more heavily on cultural preservation and the capacity of public services to accommodate growth.

The leaders' debates are likely to expose these differences clearly, offering voters a deeper understanding of how each party envisions Quebec's future.

Quebec identity and sovereignty

Questions of language, culture, identity, and national aspirations continue to occupy a unique place in Quebec politics.

Although sovereignty is no longer the dominant issue it once was, it remains central to the Parti Québécois and continues to influence broader political discussions. At the same time, concerns about protecting French language and Quebec culture extend far beyond the sovereigntist movement.

The CAQ, Liberals, PQ, Québec solidaire, and Conservatives all approach these questions differently. Debate exchanges on identity often become some of the most passionate and closely watched moments of an election campaign because they touch on fundamental questions about who Quebecers are and where they want the province to go.

Beyond the television cameras

Today's debates do not end when the moderator signs off.

Within minutes, key moments are shared across social media platforms, dissected on talk radio, analyzed by journalists, and debated by voters online. In many cases, the most influential audience is not the one watching live but the much larger audience that experiences the debate later through clips and commentary.

A memorable exchange can dominate news coverage for days. A strong answer can energize volunteers and attract donations. A mistake can quickly become a campaign liability.

For modern political leaders, the challenge is twofold: perform effectively on stage and create moments that resonate long after



the broadcast ends.

The final test before election day

As Quebec moves closer to October 5, the leaders' debates represent one of the campaign's final and most important democratic exercises. They force politicians to defend their ideas publicly, challenge one another directly, and demonstrate why they deserve the trust of voters.

The debates will not answer every question facing Quebec, nor will they determine the election alone. But they provide something increasingly rare in modern politics: an opportunity for citizens to evaluate leadership in its simplest form.

When Quebecers cast their ballots, they will think about health-care wait times, housing costs, taxes, schools, immigration, and the cultural future of the province. They will also remember the performances, exchanges, and impressions created on the debate stage.

For some voters, those moments may confirm an existing choice. For others, they may prove decisive.

Either way, the leaders' debates remain one of the campaign's most significant events, offering Quebecers a final opportunity to separate rhetoric from reality before choosing who will lead the province into its next chapter.

2026 Provincial Election



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If your assigned polling place does not meet your accessibility needs, ask your returning officer for authorization to vote at another location.

On October 5, exercise your right to vote

 **élections
Québec**



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A telecommunications problem that temporarily changed how some 911 calls reached local emergency centres has been resolved, with police confirming that every call made during the incident was received and handled.

The Régie intermunicipale de police Thérèse-De Blainville, which serves Boisbriand, Lorraine, Rosemère and Sainte-Thérèse, issued an alert after becoming aware of what it described as a Canada-wide telecommunications problem.

According to the police service, the difficulty did not shut down 911. Instead, calls could follow an unusual route before reaching RIPTB dispatchers. In some cases, that additional transfer may have produced a slightly longer delay than usual.

911 routing problem resolved; RIPTB says every emergency call was handled

*Temporary national telecommunications issue affected
the path taken by some calls, but police say there was no
interruption in service*

While the problem was underway, the RIPTB asked residents to temporarily call its direct number, 450-435-2421, for faster service. Exceptionally, that instruction also applied to people seeking an urgent police response.

The recommendation was a temporary measure intended to bypass the altered routing process. The police service emphasized throughout the alert that 911 remained operational and that emergency calls were still being answered.

Once normal transmission was restored, the RIPTB withdrew the temporary instruction. Residents should now once again call 911 for an emergency. The number 450-435-2421 has returned to its regular use as the police service's administrative line for non-urgent requests.

Perhaps the most important part of the police update was its confirmation that no interruption in service occurred. Although the route taken by certain calls may have been different, the RIPTB said all 911 calls were received and processed.

The distinction matters. Reports of a "911 outage" can suggest that callers were unable to reach emergency services at all. Based on the information released by the RIPTB, that was not the situation locally. The problem affected the transmission and routing of calls rather than the ability of the police service to receive and respond to them.

The RIPTB also said it remained fully operational throughout the incident and continued to provide police coverage across its entire territory.

Similar alerts were issued elsewhere in the region, supporting

the police service's description of a problem extending beyond its own communications centre. The City of Saint-Eustache, for example, subsequently announced that its 911 line had returned to normal early on September 17.

The precise technical cause was not detailed in the RIPTB's public notice. The police service identified it only as a national telecommunications problem and did not name a particular carrier or network operator. There was also no indication in the information released that the incident was connected to local police equipment or operations.

Although the immediate problem had been resolved well before this week's edition went to press, the episode offers a useful reminder about emergency communications. A 911 service can remain available even when a technical problem changes the path a call must take before reaching a local dispatcher.

It also demonstrates why residents should pay attention to instructions issued by their local police service during a telecommunications disruption. During this incident, the direct police number was temporarily recommended even for urgent situations. That guidance is no longer in effect.

The current instructions are clear: residents of Boisbriand, Lorraine, Rosemère and Sainte-Thérèse should call 911 when immediate emergency assistance is required. For non-urgent police matters, they may contact the RIPTB at 450-435-2421.

The police service thanked residents for their patience and cooperation while the routing problem was being monitored and corrected.

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Blainville's new Stablex committee to begin work in October

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A new municipal committee bringing together government officials, environmental organizations, scientists, residents and representatives of Stablex will begin work in October, as Blainville seeks closer scrutiny of the hazardous-waste company's operations and clearer communication with the public.

Created by a resolution of city council in January, the Stablex Coordination Committee will be chaired by Blainville's general administration. Its mandate is to examine environmental monitoring results, establish deadlines for follow-up measures, analyze risks associated with the company's activities and develop appropriate risk-management responses.

The committee will also work on public communication and the transfer of information among Stablex, the municipality, provincial authorities, public health officials and residents.

More specifically, the City says the committee will monitor whether the competent authorities are properly carrying out their responsibilities for supervising and regulating Stablex. It will also seek to ensure that concerns raised by Blainville residents are understood by provincial authorities.

The initiative represents a municipal attempt to impose greater structure on a file that has generated years of public concern and political conflict. Stablex operates a hazardous-waste treatment and disposal facility on Industrial Boulevard in Blainville. The company handles contaminated soils and difficult-to-treat industrial waste, which it chemically treats and stabilizes before placing the resulting material in secure disposal cells.

The facility has operated in Blainville since 1983. Questions surrounding environmental surveillance, the importation of hazardous waste and the company's plans for future disposal capacity have made Stablex one of the most closely watched environmental files on the North Shore.

The new body replaces the former Stablex Monitoring Committee, which was created by Quebec's Environment



Ministry in 1991. According to the City, the ministry had gradually stopped supervising that committee and was no longer regularly represented at its meetings.

At the mayor's request, ministry representatives returned to the meetings in 2025. However, the provincial environment minister reportedly informed the City that the ministry did not intend to continue supervising committees of this kind. Blainville subsequently decided to assume leadership and redesign the committee.

The new committee's responsibilities will include reviewing surveillance data collected under requirements imposed by Quebec's Ministry of the Environment, the Fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks. It will create a calendar of environmental actions and follow-ups, identify deadlines and examine risks related to the coexistence of Stablex's industrial activities with the surrounding community.

The committee itself will not replace provincial inspectors or assume the ministry's regulatory powers. Its role will instead be to coordinate information, follow the progress of required measures and press the responsible authorities for clear answers when concerns arise.

Four representatives from the City of Blainville will sit on the committee, including a member of the general administration.

Stablex will appoint two representatives.

The provincial Environment Ministry and the regional public health department will each have one representative, with the possibility of adding another person when a particular issue requires additional expertise.

Residents will also have a direct presence. Following a municipal selection process, Blainville chose biologist Anaïs Boutin and chemical engineer Annie Laberge to join the committee.

Boutin has worked with government bodies and organizations involved in wildlife protection and conservation. In Blainville, she contributed to the development of the city's ecological transition plan.

Laberge is a chemical engineer and consultant with more than 30 years of experience in quality assurance, occupational health and safety prevention, and the improvement of organizational and industrial processes. Her previous assignments have included work with manufacturing and construction-sector organizations.

A third citizen representative will be delegated by Stablex's Good Neighbour Committee, a discussion and consultation group established by the company to maintain communication with residents living near its facilities.

Two specialized environmental organizations will complete the committee's membership.

The Conseil des bassins versants des Mille-Îles, commonly known as COBAMIL, will contribute its regional expertise in watershed management. The organization works with municipalities and other local decision-makers to protect water resources and coordinate implementation of the regional water master plan.

Nature-Action Québec will also participate. The organization works with municipalities, institutions and community partners on the protection and management of natural environments, environmental best practices and residual-material management.

The variety of participants gives the committee access to scientific, technical, municipal and community perspectives. It also creates a setting in which Stablex and the authorities responsible for regulating it can be questioned at the same table.

Boisbriand opens six new pickleball courts at Pellerin Park

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Boisbriand residents now have six new courts on which to enjoy one of North America's fastest-growing recreational sports, following the completion of summer improvements at Pellerin Park.

The City of Boisbriand has officially announced the opening of the six pickleball courts, which are available to the public without a reservation. The new facilities were developed as part of the municipality's 2025-2035 Parks and Green Spaces Master Plan.

Work at the park also included the modernization of its tennis facilities. The number of tennis courts was reduced from four to two to accommodate the new pickleball courts, leaving residents with dedicated spaces for both sports.

Mayor Christine Beaudette said the project reflects the municipality's effort to respond to changing recreational interests while continuing to provide residents with high-quality public facilities.

"These new courts respond to growing interest in pickleball and demonstrate our determination to offer quality facilities to residents," Beaudette said.

She credited the City's recreation department with leading the project and adapting Boisbriand's recreational offering to new trends and residents' expectations.

Pickleball combines elements of tennis, badminton and table

tennis. Its smaller court and generally slower pace can make the sport approachable for beginners, while experienced players can develop a fast and highly competitive style of play. Its popularity has also made access to suitable courts an increasingly important consideration for municipalities planning recreational infrastructure.

At Pellerin Park, the six new courts and two updated tennis

courts form part of a broader range of amenities that includes a swimming pool, splash pad, soccer field, playgrounds, skating rinks and other recreational equipment.

The pickleball and tennis courts are open for free public use every day from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., from May through October. Municipal park regulations and posted instructions remain in effect.



From left: Daniel Kaeser, city councillor; Chantal Vaillancourt, city councillor; Lori Doucet, city councillor; Christine Beaudette, mayor of Boisbriand; Maude Whittom, city councillor; Patrick Thifault, city councillor; and Stéphanie Aubin, division head of operations with the Recreation Department.

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Seven cities, 28 free events

North Shore celebrates 30 years of culture

MARIA DIAMANTIS
info@newsfirst.ca

For six days this September, the cultural map of Thérèse-De Blainville will extend far beyond galleries and theatres. Libraries, parks, community buildings, heritage sites and public spaces across all seven municipalities of the MRC will host free activities designed to make residents more than spectators.

The MRC de Thérèse-De Blainville has announced 28 free activities in 16 locations for the 30th edition of the Journées de la culture. Events will take place from September 22 to 27, with the main program concentrated during the three official celebration days of September 25, 26 and 27.

Blainville, Boisbriand, Bois-des-Filion, Lorraine, Rosemère, Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines and Sainte-Thérèse will all participate.

This year's anniversary theme, Culture Makes Us Feel Good: Our Motto for 30 Years, presents culture not simply as entertainment, but as a way for people to meet, express themselves, experiment and strengthen their connection to the communities in which they live.

The program covers an unusually broad range of disciplines: technological arts, singing, circus, dance, drawing, writing, history, improvisation, fine crafts, music, painting, photography and theatre. Residents will be able to attend performances and exhibitions, but also participate in workshops, collective creations, guided visits, historical and artistic walks, traditional dancing and family activities.

From circus to colour in Boisbriand and Blainville

In Boisbriand, Productions Cirkaz will present Cirk O'pomes at the Centre de création de Boisbriand. The interactive production combines circus performance, juggling and clowning, inviting the audience into a playful world where the boundary between performers and spectators becomes less rigid.

In Blainville, visual artist Sébastien Gaudette will present Habiter la couleur, or Living in Colour. Rather than displaying a series of conventional framed works, the exhibition creates an immersive theatrical environment in which shadows, light and three-dimensional forms interact.

The installations are created directly in the exhibition space, allowing visitors to move freely through an artwork that appears to change as they explore it. Following the visit, children and adults will be invited to experiment with colour, forms and textures during a creative workshop using drawings on crumpled paper.

Technology becomes an artistic tool in Bois-des-Filion

Young participants in Bois-des-Filion will be introduced to the meeting point between art and technology through a Makey Makey workshop offered by Montreal's Society for Arts and Technology.

Makey Makey technology allows ordinary objects to function like computer controls when connected to a small electronic circuit. In the context of the workshop, electronics and interactivity will



become artistic materials, giving young people an accessible way to experiment with digital creation.

The activity reflects the wider scope of the Journées de la culture, where culture can mean a choir or a painting, but also an electronic experiment that produces sound, movement or interaction.

Lorraine finds its collective voice

In Lorraine, residents will be able to discover choral singing through introductory workshops led by Marie-Eve Varin of the Chorale du Vieux Palais and MEV Musique.

The workshops are intended to make group singing approachable, including for participants who may never have sung in a choir. The emphasis is on discovery and participation rather than previous musical training.

It is an appropriate fit for this year's theme: singing together requires listening, cooperation and the willingness to add one individual voice to a larger collective sound.

Rosemère turns memories into stories

In Rosemère, storyteller and cultural facilitator Maude Roberge Dumas, known as L'Assembleuse, will lead the conference Mes racines: comment raconter mon histoire — My Roots: How to Tell My Story.

Traditional dance comes alive in Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines

In Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, residents of different generations will be invited to take part in an evening of traditional dancing.

A caller will guide the dances while musicians provide live accompaniment, making the activity accessible even to participants unfamiliar with the steps. The event is intended to recreate the communal spirit of traditional dance gatherings, where music, movement and social interaction are inseparable.

Rather than presenting folklore as something preserved behind glass, the evening will allow participants to experience it as a living and evolving practice.

A major family celebration in Sainte-Thérèse

In Sainte-Thérèse, Parc Charles-Bosson will host a large family celebration bringing together several artistic and participatory activities.

Creativity and cultural diversity will be central to the event, with programming intended for both children and adults. By using a public park rather than a formal cultural venue, organizers hope to reach residents who might not normally attend an exhibition, workshop or performance.

The location also illustrates one of the guiding principles of the anniversary edition: culture can happen in familiar everyday spaces and does not require a ticket, specialized knowledge or a formal setting.

Moving from spectator to participant

Liza Poulin, prefect of the MRC and mayor of Blainville, said culture contributes directly to the vitality of local communities by creating opportunities for residents to meet, understand one another and share what unites them while Christine Beaudette, mayor of Boisbriand and president of the MRC's Table action culture et patrimoine, said the strength of the Journées de la culture lies in the opportunity to "move from spectator to participant."

The MRC's program serves a territory of close to 168,000 residents across 207 square kilometres. Its seven cities differ in size and character, but the regional program is designed to connect them through a shared celebration rather than concentrate activities in a single cultural centre.

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DIRECT ANSWERS

FROM WAYNE & TAMARA

HEAD GAMES

Q I have a coworker I've been friendly with for several years. About three months ago she started being too busy to have lunch together. I asked her once whether anything was wrong and whether I offended her in some way. She assured me nothing was amiss and she considers me a friend at work.

But in the past month she stopped speaking to me unless absolutely necessary. No more sailing into my office, flopping onto a chair, and asking, How is life? No more talking about her work stuff and home stuff. No more good morning or good night, even when she is leaving the office next door to mine and always used to pop her head in.

Once she went so far as to look through me to say good morning to someone else. Another time she was in the conference room having arrived first for a meeting. I arrived second, and she kept her head down as if very busy until a third person arrived, then said hello to both of us.

There have been hundreds of instances of not seeming to hear me when I say a normal pleasant greeting to her in her office or in the hallway. I feel hurt and disturbed as I wonder if I'm being accused of something I didn't do, or if I put my foot in my mouth in a way that never struck me as offensive.

I feel it would be useless to ask again if something is wrong. I think my real question is, how can I make myself tougher so a thing like this doesn't occupy my mind and bring me close to tears a few times every day? Are there steps a person can take to grow a tougher skin?

Alexia

A Alexia, Wayne once asked a 60-ish friend why he was always in such high spirits. This friend explained that as a young man he worried incessantly. He worried over tests, dates, and whether he would ever find a job. Then in his late teens he had an epiphany. Worry accomplishes

nothing.

What you need is not so much a tougher skin as to stop worrying over things beyond your control. You asked if there was a problem and she denied it. You've done all you can. For some reason, the friendly woman with an office next door moved away and a person with whom you have little in common and no rapport moved in. That's curious, but it's not a reason for worry.

In the personal space between her ears something is going on. You are likely never to know what. Wayne once smiled at a friend on a street corner and was baffled when a woman he didn't know and hadn't noticed crossed the street to ask why he was laughing at her. Say what?

People do all manner of strange things. People tell tales, create hoopla, and use passive aggression. They also show extraordinary kindness and care. Good people torture themselves asking why, why, why. But the answer is often as simple as displaced emotion. This woman may be a little like the serial killer who wants to kill his mother but kills other women instead.

Not everything in life carries the same weight. Your family carries a certain weight, your partner a certain weight, your house a certain weight, and your neighbors a certain weight. Your job carries a certain weight. You are giving her too much weight. Your purpose at work is work.

Treat this woman with the normal corporate politeness used in the workplace. Treat her professionally, clinically, and distantly. When you walk into a room and she is there, ignore her, but with a third person present act normally.

It always helps to ask ourselves, what is my purpose in life? Then let your life proceed from your purpose and not from the oddities and quirks of others.

Tamara

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

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When care homes become galleries: Laurentides residents take centre stage

MARIA DIAMANTIS
info@newsfirst.ca

For one weekend, long-term care homes across the Laurentides will become art galleries, concert spaces and meeting places — with residents taking their place not simply as spectators, but as artists, singers, photographers and storytellers.

All 19 CHSLDs, seniors' homes and alternative seniors' homes operated by Santé Québec Laurentides will participate in the 30th edition of the Journées de la culture, from September 25 to 27. The public is invited inside to discover exhibitions, music, singing, photography, crafts, historical objects and intergenerational projects.

Grouped under the circuit "Culture at the Heart of Our Living Environments," the activities offer North Shore residents a rare opportunity to see another side of institutions more commonly associated with medical care and declining autonomy. Here, the emphasis will be on the personalities, memories and abilities of the people who live there.

In Blainville, two very different events will be held on Friday, September 25. At the Maison des aînés et alternative, the exhibition I Am Unique — Expressions Without Limits will feature paintings, drawings and sculptures created by residents living with intellectual disabilities. Each work is intended to express an individual story, emotion or way of seeing the world. The exhibition runs from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

That same afternoon, the CHSLD de Blainville



will present Blainville in Harmony, a celebration built around music and singing, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

At Sainte-Thérèse's CHSLD Drapeau-Deschambault, visitors will be able to see works produced by residents over the past year. A performance by the choir of the Trouve ta voie arts academy will accompany the exhibition. The event takes place Friday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The intergenerational element will be especially visible in Rosemère. Residents of CHSLD Hubert-Maisonnette and young participants from the Trouve ta voie academy have spent several months creating butterfly-inspired works with two professional artists. Using acrylic paint, gouache and collage, the project explores the pleasure of creating together across generations. The exhibition, The Art of Joy, will be open Sunday, September 27,

from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Saint-Eustache will also place local creativity in the spotlight. On Saturday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., the CHSLD de Saint-Eustache will exhibit creations by residents, employees and volunteers. In Mirabel, visitors can discover photographs taken by residents and volunteers at the CHSLD de Saint-Benoît on Friday, while the Maison des aînés de Saint-Canut will combine visual art and choral music on Sunday.

Beyond the weekend program, the initiative touches on a serious question: how can institutional living remain connected to the surrounding community? A major World Health Organization review has found that participation in the arts can contribute to health promotion, social connection and the management of age-related and neurological conditions. Art is not a substitute for care, but it can support expression, memory, dignity and a sense of belonging.

Julie Delaney, president and CEO of Santé Québec Laurentides, said the participation of every regional residential facility reflects the role culture can play in encouraging expression, creating relationships and reducing isolation.

Perhaps the most meaningful part of the weekend is simply that the doors will be open. Rather than viewing a CHSLD as a world apart, visitors will encounter residents as people with histories to share, songs to sing and work worthy of an audience.

All Journées de la culture activities are free and open to the public. No reservation is required for the events highlighted above.

Fire at St-Eustache Hospital prompts temporary relocation of patients and staff

ALESSANDRO COMMISSO
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
alessandro@newsfirst.ca

A fire broke out at St-Eustache Hospital on Monday, September 14, prompting a response from emergency crews and the temporary relocation of patients and staff. No injuries

were reported.

The fire started on the third floor during the early afternoon. Firefighters arrived quickly and were able to bring the situation under control,

preventing any casualties.

Although the cause has not yet been officially confirmed, several sources have speculated that the blaze may have originated in the mechanical rooms, where work was being carried out at the time. Authorities have not released any findings from their investigation and continue to examine the circumstances surrounding the incident.

As emergency crews worked to contain the fire, water from firefighting efforts accumulated on the third floor. Combined with the need to secure the affected area for investigators, the situation led hospital officials to move patients and staff to another wing of the facility as a precaution.

The relocation caused temporary disruptions but allowed medical services to continue operating while emergency personnel assessed the damage and conducted their investigation.

The incident highlighted the effectiveness of the hospital's emergency procedures, with staff and first responders working together to ensure everyone was safely relocated. Given the challenges associated with responding to a fire in an active healthcare facility, the absence of injuries was a positive outcome.

Investigators have yet to determine the exact cause of the fire. Until the investigation is completed, it remains unclear whether the work being conducted in the area played any role in the incident.

While the affected section of the hospital was secured for inspection and cleanup, operations continued elsewhere in the building. Further information is expected once authorities complete their investigation and release their findings.



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ARIES

You'll take on a new activity with the clear goal of reaching the podium. Your determination is impressive, and your competitive spirit is reawakening. The applause will confirm that you've made a significant impact.



TAURUS

If fatigue is building up, take a hard look at your lifestyle. With a new routine, stimulating outings and a balanced diet, you'll gradually regain vitality. Your body responds well to even the smallest adjustments.



GEMINI

Stress can transform into energy if it's properly channeled. By organizing your schedule and managing priorities more effectively, you'll turn pressure into a remarkable performance. You'll juggle work, personal life and ambitious projects with skill.



CANCER

Everything is clicking into place for a major turning point. Prepare for a launch, a promotion or new responsibilities. You'll discover talents you never fully tapped into before. This new perspective expands your capacity to take action and increases your confidence.



LEO

Travel plans are taking shape, although they're still out on the distant horizon. Passport, documents, vaccinations, reservations: the more you prepare, the greater your peace of mind. This preparation is already fueling your excitement and preventing last-minute oversights.



VIRGO

An injustice immediately awakens your sense of duty and your need to restore balance. You step in as a mediator, propose concrete solutions and give a voice to those who are rarely heard. Your intervention truly helps restore harmony.



LIBRA

Faced with a conflict, your first reaction might be firm, even harsh, but a more diplomatic approach will be more effective. By combining tact, empathy and a sense of justice, you'll manage to resolve a complex situation.



SCORPIO

You'll invest impressive energy into reaching an agreement, signing a contract or finalizing a transaction. Your nights may be disrupted by doubts, but your perseverance makes all the difference.



SAGITTARIUS

A leadership position may come your way. Before accepting, consider the emotional burden and stress the role may entail. With cautious deliberation, you'll protect your health while fulfilling your ambitions.



CAPRICORN

A new, healthier lifestyle is taking shape, combining a balanced diet with regular physical exercise. The results will soon be visible. Pride, confidence and a restored sense of control will strengthen your determination.



AQUARIUS

You dare to say out loud what many think quietly. However, some comments may sting if your delivery is too blunt. By softening your words, you'll remain authentic while respecting others' feelings.



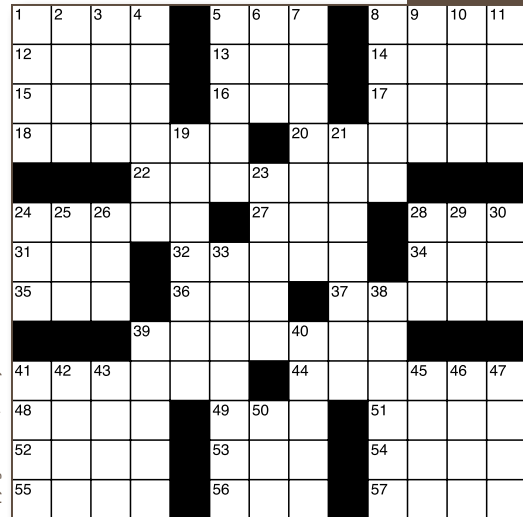
PISCES

A period of monetary stress requires you to review your accounts thoroughly. By checking bills, subscriptions or automated payments, you may uncover an error or an overpayment. This discovery will ease your anxiety and help rebalance your budget.

Coffee Break

CROSSWORD

GRID N° 312



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ACROSS

- Nest sound
- Luxury spot
- Small insects
- Farmer's measure
- Crony
- Painfully tender
- Blacken
- Circle section
- Perceived
- Threw
- Breakfast order
- Not repeated: hyph.
- Identical pairs
- Freight unit
- Taper off
- "Some Like It ____"
- Manicurist's concern
- Caribbean, e.g.
- No's opposite
- Summer fruit drink

DOWN

- Agreement
- Mountain feedback
- Geologic periods
- Human
- Digging tool
- Standard
- Spirits
- Credit
- "The First ____"
- Peevish
- Thrive
- Cozier
- Sports venues
- Final word in prayer
- Clear profit
- Stable youth
- Heat outlet
- Nibble
- Ballet skirt
- Discontinues
- Lacking water
- Highbrow
- Poplar or pine
- Released
- Trap
- Horror-film creature
- Pigs' place
- "Love ____ Neighbor"
- Sorrow
- That thing's
- Racetrack feature
- Gambling stake
- Green ____
- Packers
- Embellished
- Builds
- Pub servings
- Peppermint ____
- Own
- Bird of ill ____
- Set right
- Name word
- Singing voice
- Ticket remainder
- Pitcher handle

Sudoku

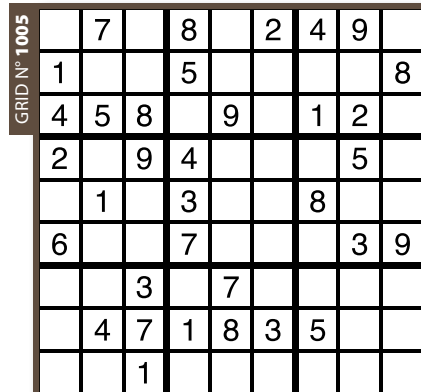
HOW TO PLAY

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.

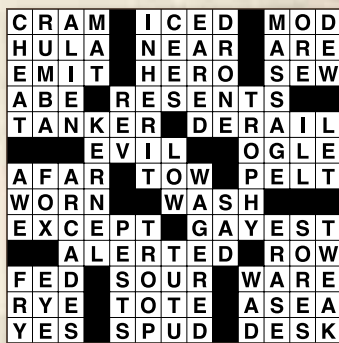
You already have a few numbers to get you started.

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

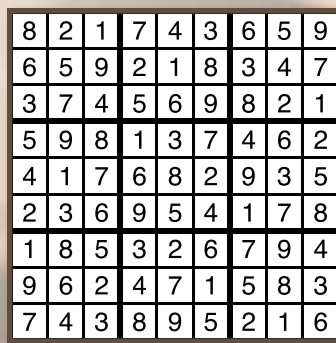


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(Quebec) |
| 2. Watermelon
(Ontario) | 10. Apples (3) (Quebec) |
| 3. Green grapes
(California) | 11. Onions (4-5)
(Quebec) |
| 4. Medley tomatoes
(Canada) | 12. Celery (Quebec) |
| 5. Romaine lettuce
(Quebec) | 13. Oranges (3-4)
(South Africa) |
| 6. Yellow beans
(Quebec) | 14. Lemons (2)
(South Africa) |
| 7. Broccoli (Quebec) | 15. Garlic (Argentina) |
| 8. Corn (3) (Quebec) | 16. Bananas (4)
(Honduras) |
| | 17. Avocado (1)
(Mexico) |

SMALL BASKET (\$22)

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Strawberries
or Blueberries
(Mexico) | 6. Green beans
(Quebec) |
| 2. Big Tomatoes (2)
(Canada) | 7. Onions (3)
(Quebec) |
| 3. Bananas (3)
(Honduras) | 8. Cantaloupe (1)
(Quebec) |
| 4. Avocado (1)
(Mexico) | 9. Oranges (2)
(South Africa) |
| 5. Romaine lettuce
(Quebec) | 10. Peppers (2)
(Canada) |
| | 11. Corn (2) (Quebec) |

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