

Chronicle-Telegraph

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2024, 260TH year, No. 9

Canada Post Publication no. 40026512 - EDITION VALID UNTIL March 13, 2024 -



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Strike sinks Gabrielle-Roy Library reopening

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The delay-plagued reopening of the Gabrielle-Roy Library hit another roadblock days before the scheduled opening ceremonies.

On Feb. 25, the 240 employees of the Institut Canadien de Québec, which manages the city's public library network, voted in favour of an indefinite strike starting March 1, the first of three days of planned festivities to celebrate the library's reopening.

"On March 1, there will

be a picket line [in front of the library] if we don't have a satisfying offer," Roxane Larouche, a spokesperson for Travailleurs et Travailleuses unis de l'alimentation et du commerce, Local 501 (TUAC 501) which represents workers at all of the city's 26 public libraries, said at the time.

Larouche said there would be "no book borrowing, no documentation, acquisition, classification, billing or people preparing materials" to be lent out, for the duration of the strike. The city also scuttled the three days of free concerts, tours and demonstrations planned for the grand opening. Although Mayor Bruno Marchand initially insisted the

celebrations would go forward, city officials ultimately decided that "the situation doesn't allow the public to fully enjoy the planned activities and discover its library." A media tour was held Feb. 29, the day before the strike began (*See article below*). City officials say \$300,000 of public money was invested in the opening celebrations, of which \$60,000 is not recoverable.

"I don't know what we're going to do [to celebrate the reopening] but we won't have the same resources," said Marchand.

Union members are calling for higher salaries, a payscale in line with Ville de Québec employees carrying out similar

tasks, more predictable schedules, paid break periods and the ability to take partial vacation days, Larouche explained. They have been without a contract since December 2022.

The strike comes at an extremely inconvenient time for the central library. It closed for major renovations in August 2019 and was originally supposed to reopen in 2021. The ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour shortage and the cancellation of a call for tenders after bids came in higher than expected delayed the opening for more than two years. In March 2023, the reopening was pushed back further when construction crews found that a beam was



Photo by Cassandra Kerwin

Hundreds of Quebec City library workers went on strike starting on March 1, cancelling the three days of festivities originally planned for the grand reopening of the Gabrielle-Roy Library.

in need of major repairs. The strike pushes the planned public opening back further; it is now scheduled for March 12.

Twenty-three of the city's 26 libraries will close for the duration of the strike. The

Monique-Corriveau Library (Sainte-Foy) and the Étienne-Parent Library (Beauport) will reopen on a reduced schedule starting March 6.

Newly renovated Gabrielle-Roy Library offers much more than books

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The newly renovated Gabrielle-Roy Library has a performance theatre, a movie theatre, a kitchen area, a terrasse with a garden, several play areas for children, a recording studio, a broadcast room, bold works of art, musical instrument rentals, a seedling plant zone, a number of meeting rooms and more.

It also has books and documents, – more than 200,000 of them.

With a strike by city library employees delaying the official reopening of the facility (*see article above*), officials gave reporters a tour Feb. 28 to unveil the results of years of construction and planning dating back to 2016.

Visitors to the library, when it does open to the public after its \$43.3-million makeover, will see a vastly brighter, more open and varied space compared to the gloomy interior of the original building that opened in 1983. While the familiar staircase and circular storeys remain, they have been completely rebuilt.

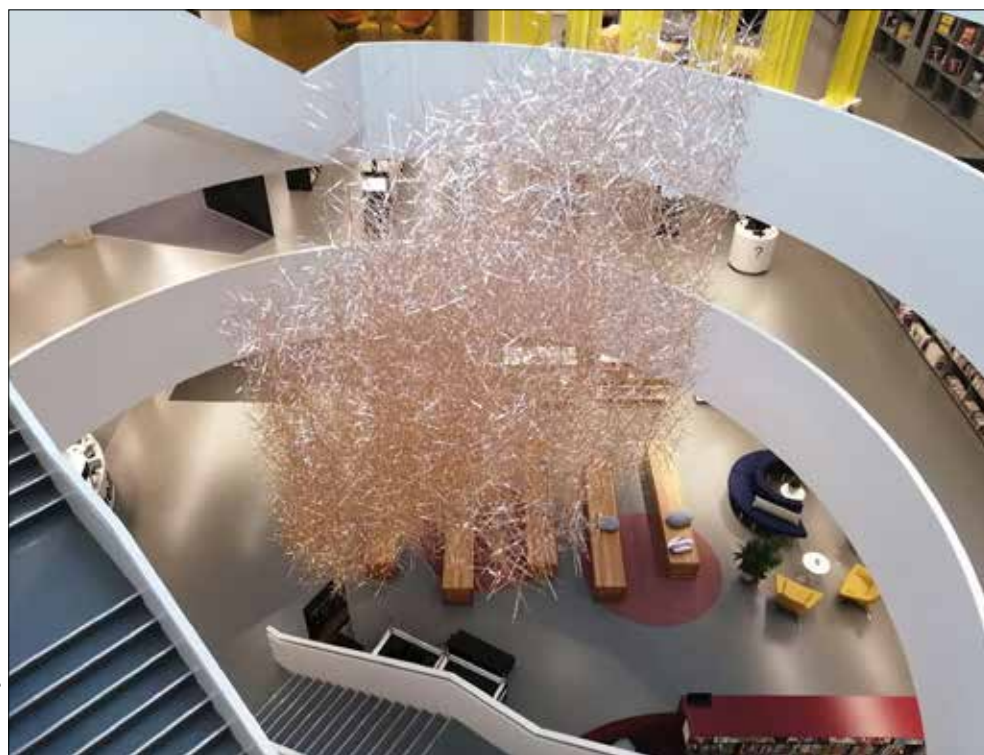


Photo by Peter Black

The familiar hanging artwork has been restored and returned to the newly revamped main staircase in the library.

Designed around the concept of 10 "thematic centres," the building itself is more than a quarter larger than the original structure, at 10,500 square metres. The design team was a consortium led by Saucier + Perrotte and GLCRM.

Mayor Bruno Marchand said in a statement, "This central library is an exceptional place – one of the most beautiful in Canada, and I would even go so far as to say in the world."

While the transformation of the library's interior space and exterior structure is an impressive enough achievement, the city architect overseeing the project has said the most difficult challenge was having to essentially redo from top to bottom an existing structure in a busy urban zone.

Yasmina Lacasse said transforming a building erected in the 1980s to conform to current regulations meant "lots of

changes to the structure" in terms of, for example, earthquake resilience standards and electromechanical infrastructure.

On top of the architectural and engineering challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic and its ripple effects presented a major setback and caused construction delays. In spring 2023, "major repairs to a beam" delayed completion further. The opening date was initially targeted for last spring.

Although there is some question about the global cost of the project, officials say it stayed within budget with the help



Photo by Peter Black

City architect Yasmina Lacasse, who oversaw the project, checks out the secret door in the children's book section.

of some cost-cutting measures such as reducing the size of the rooftop terrasse.

The provincial government contributed about \$10 million and the federal government \$1.5 million to the project.

Lacasse said, "I'm just hoping every citizen finds themselves in it, likes every space or just only one, and maybe discovers something else, something new, something that could be interesting. So I really hope citizens like it as much as we thought they would."

The library features some 11 major works by Quebec artists, including the refurbished work by Micheline Beauchemin that hangs in the atrium, comprising some 18,400 strips of golden aluminum.

There is also a portrait of the library's namesake painted

by Jean-Paul Lemieux in 1953 and on loan from the Institut Canadien.

The library's extensive archival collection will be more accessible in the new building. As an example, on display for the media tour was a city register with the signatures of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth dated May 17, 1939, signed when the royal couple toured Canada and the United States to drum up support for the impending war with Nazi Germany.

Whenever the library finally opens to the public, Marchand said, "It is up to the population to reclaim this incredible place of culture and knowledge which will become an important part of our cultural signature in Quebec."

Label /



COMMENTARY

Triumph and error marked the momentous saga of Brian Mulroney



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The Brian Mulroney political saga could well have come to an abrupt end on Feb. 22, 1976.

The slick Montreal lawyer with small-town Quebec roots was up against a little-known Progressive Conservative MP from Alberta in the race to succeed “the best prime min-

ister there never was,” former Nova Scotia premier Robert Stanfield.

Mulroney and his rival Joe Clark, both 36, faced the perceived favourite, former Quebec Liberal justice minister and federal PC MP Claude Wagner, whose son Richard is now chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Clark narrowly beat Wagner on the fourth ballot, with Mulroney eliminated on the third, far back from the top two.

After the convention in Ottawa, according to *The Politics of Ambition*, the 1991 biography by veteran journalist John Sawatsky, a bitterly disappointed Mulroney quoted U.S. senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan about the day President John F. Kennedy was shot: “If you are Irish, you know that at some point the world is going to break your heart.”

Broken-hearted and broke from campaign debts, Mulroney retreated to Montreal and settled into a despondency

that often involved drink and railing against Clark. There is even a story that the federal Liberals, hearing of Mulroney's agonized state, tried to recruit him.

But then, faith and begorrah, the luck of the Irish shone brightly through the gloom enveloping the Boy from Baie-Comeau. On Dec. 13, 1979, the minority government Clark had won by beating the mighty Pierre Trudeau seven months earlier was defeated on a confidence motion in the House of Commons.

Your scribe happened to be in the gallery when the vote was counted that day, which, in retrospect, was one of the most momentous in recent Canadian history.

An election set for Feb. 18, 1980, would return a resurrected Trudeau and the energized Liberals to power, with a referendum on Quebec sovereignty to fight as a top priority. Holding court at the Ritz-Carlton Maritime Bar,

Brian Mulroney knew he had been given a second chance to realize his ambition thanks to a fatal error by his nemesis.

The fight in the 1983 Tory leadership convention that followed a leadership review the previous year was bitter, but Mulroney finally edged Clark out on the fourth ballot. Still, it was a close vote, with Clark ahead on the first three ballots.

We raise this no-so-far-fetched “what if ...?” because it's hard to imagine what might have transpired in Canadian politics if Joe Clark had won that fateful vote – as he easily could have with a little more procedural smarts – and Brian Mulroney was rendered a footnote of history.

Maybe he would have eventually swallowed his considerable pride and become a powerful Quebec minister in a Clark government. Maybe he would have stayed put in the corporate world and made a fortune – his stint between 1976 and 1983 as president

of the Iron Ore Company of Canada had already given him lifelong financial security.

From the torrent of reflections on Mulroney's legacy published since his death on Feb. 29, one gleans that his was a record of exceptional achievement, but also of failures and human weakness. This was exemplified by the fact the same man who won the largest majority in history for his party in 1984 also left it in a position to be all but wiped out in the 1993 election.

Two years after that epic defeat of the soon-to-be-extinct Progressive Conservative party, Canada came close to chaos and breakup in the second Quebec sovereignty referendum in 1995.

That national nail-biter was the direct result of Mulroney's well-meaning but high-risk Meech Lake Accord, an attempt to repair what he perceived to be Pierre Trudeau's error in adopting an amended Constitution lacking the signa-

ture of Quebec premier René Lévesque, who had just lost the 1980 referendum.

Mulroney's aim 10 years later to have Quebec renew its vows with Canada with “honour and enthusiasm” backfired into a roaring backlash of humiliation and anger.

The Accord died in June 1990, the result of a baffling three-year deadline for ratification by all 10 provinces. Two years later, the Charlottetown Accord, an attempt to appease recalcitrant provinces, was defeated in a national referendum.

All political hell broke loose, and here we are 30 years later with the Bloc Québécois still a force in Quebec and an ascendant Parti Québécois threatening another episode of referendum drama.

That little quibble aside, we salute a remarkable character, a bold leader who achieved much and was not afraid to “roll the dice.”

State secularism law upheld by appeals court

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Quebec's controversial state secularism legislation, known as Bill 21, which forbids authority figures including police officers and public school teachers from wearing visible religious symbols, has been upheld by the province's Court of Appeals, much to the dismay of many in the English-speaking community. The appeals court panel, made up of judges Manon Savard, Yves-Marie Morissette and Marie-France Bich, handed down their judgment on Feb. 29.

The judges found that the law was “valid with regard to the power-sharing principles set out in the Constitution Act, 1867, and did not contradict the law, nor any pre-Confederation principle having constitutional value.” They also found that the law did not infringe on the principle of equality of the sexes or the “educational rights” of the English-speaking community of Quebec, and its uses of the notwithstanding clause were not unconstitutional. They specified that the law banned visible religious symbols in public daycare centres and primary and secondary schools, but did not affect private schools, CEGEPs or universities, and did not prevent anyone from wearing a hijab, kippa, turban, cross

or similar symbol outside of a professional context.

The panel overturned a previous Superior Court ruling which found that the law infringed on the constitutional right of the English-speaking community to govern its own schools.

Premier François Legault said the ruling represented “a great victory for the Quebec nation.”

“In 2019 we made the decision to forbid people in authority from wearing religious symbols [while exercising their functions] ... as a guarantee that these people are neutral,” he said in a brief French-language video message posted on Facebook. “This is a principle that unites us. We'll continue to use the

parliamentary sovereignty [notwithstanding] clause as long as it takes for Canada to recognize the choices of the [Quebec] nation. I will always fight for our nation to make its own choices,” he said.

The English Montreal School Board was one of the organizations that contested the law in court, supported by the eight other English school boards in the province, including the Central Quebec School Board (CQSB), and the Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA).

QESBA vice president Paolo Galati said he was surprised by the judgment. “The part where the judges say they feel the law does not infringe on our right to manage and control our schools – that's where we don't

see eye to eye,” he said. “Also, we have an important teacher shortage in Quebec, and to impose restrictions on who we can hire is counterproductive.”

“We maintain that the bill infringes on our right to manage and control our own schools,” Galati said, adding that the QESBA board of directors would meet to discuss further steps, which may include an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. Federal justice minister Arif Virani has indicated that the federal government will support any appeal.

The Quebec Community Groups Network said it was “profoundly disappointed” with the ruling. “We believe [English] schools should have the latitude to manage their own affairs, as is the case with

minority-language schools in other provinces,” QCGN president Sylvia Martin-Laforge said.

“Every time this government doesn't know what it's doing, they invoke the notwithstanding clause,” she added. “It is a sad statement about the climate we live in that the government feels the only way it can engineer society the way it wants is to deprive minorities of their rights. [Professionals] who want to wear the kippa or the hijab will want to go somewhere else, for sure.”

A version of this story first appeared in the *Sherbrooke Record*. It is being reproduced here thanks to the *Local Journalism Initiative*.

Quebecers march in solidarity with Palestinians

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As the war between Israel and Hamas ground on in Gaza, over 8,500 kilometres away, some 150 Palestinian immigrants and their supporters gathered in front of Quebec's National Assembly on March 2. During the days leading up to the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, they are trying to convince the Canadian government to help end the conflict and to provide more support to refugees.

Around 1 p.m., people assembled peacefully and quietly with Palestinian flags and picket signs, speaking among themselves as cultural music played in the background,

until the march began 45 minutes later.

Marchers, many of whom have relatives and friends trapped in Gaza, called for a ceasefire. “I try to call my family in Rafah [the main city of Gaza] every day just to know they are alive, but we don't always get through. I sometimes have to wait 10 days before I get any news. They have trouble finding food and water, and this is just before Ramadan,” said Fatima Ahmed, a local medical student who hopes to return to Palestine as a doctor. “We have to unite against this oppressive [Israeli] government and get international political support to end this massacre.”

According to public health officials in Gaza,

over 30,000 Palestinians have been killed and 70,000 injured since Israel began its ground offensive in Gaza in the hours following the Oct. 7, 2023 terrorist attack in Israel.

“What people do not necessarily understand is that behind these terrors hide the desire to do an ethnic cleansing,” said protester Tamara Abdullah. “Yet, we, as a people, refuse to fold to these oppressors and we proclaim our solidarity with the victims. Still, the Israeli government continuously tries to silence us by bombarding Gaza and killing Palestinians. We will not remain silent.”



Quebecers and Palestinians march from the National Assembly through the Old City to show their support for friends and family stuck in Gaza.

City unveils social housing project for scenic Old City site

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One of the most coveted and scenic sites in the city will be devoted to social housing, if a plan the city announced last week comes to be.

Under the plan, the former site of the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul church and community centre, a few years ago destined to become a luxury hotel, will welcome a two-building complex with some 170 housing units, a daycare and green spaces.

The plan is the result of consultations launched in the wake of the city's acquisition of the site in 2022 after a prolonged dispute with a developer over the parameters of the proposed hotel.

A collection of community groups has been pushing for years to have the prized site

in the Saint-Jean-Baptiste sector devoted to a social housing project. Those groups are Action-Habitation, the Fédération des coopératives d'habitation de Québec Chaudière-Appalaches, La Bouée and the Comité populaire Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

The groups hired the well-known local architecture firm Lafond Côté to draw up the vision for the site. One of the buildings will be designated as a residence for seniors with appropriate services. Both buildings will have "green" roofs with vegetation and gardens.

At a Feb. 26 City Hall news conference to announce the project, whose financing is yet to be determined, the city councillor for Cap-aux-Diamants and executive committee member responsible for urban development, Mélissa Coulombe-Leduc, applauded the breakthrough in a long deadlock.

"The models presented put forward a project on a human

scale which fully meets the city's objectives in terms of housing, sustainable development and active mobility," Coulombe-Leduc said. She added the project requires no zoning changes.

The new project for the site contrasts with what former mayor Régis Labeaume had in mind when the city decided to take the previous owner to court to obtain the property.

In November 2019, in rejecting a social housing mission for the site, he said, "It will be a park, an exceptional park, but there will be no building there." He said he'd also like to see "a mechanical link there, to make it easier to travel between Upper Town and Lower Town."

Coun. Claude Villeneuve, the current head of Québec d'Abord, Labeaume's former party, said he supported the principle of the social housing complex. In a statement to the *QCT*, he said, "We are pleased to see such a project in Québec

City. However, [Mayor Bruno Marchand] is announcing a project for which he doesn't even have a financial plan. He can pretend that the project got unanimous support but without providing a budget, it's illogical and irresponsible."

Villeneuve said, "We truly want to see such a project come to fruition in Québec, but with the proper means. The mayor was unsure which provincial government program to reference. It is a bit concerning regarding the implementation. He said that the construction could begin in 2025 but many elements are missing."

Limoiou Coun. and Transition Québec Leader Jackie Smith said she is "delighted" with the project. "After decades of procrastination regarding this land, we can only rejoice at the progress of this project. New local shops, greening, social housing, a CPE [daycare] and an RPA [seniors' residence], this is what the neighbourhood needs," she

Image from Lafond Côté Architectes.



This artist's concept shows an aerial view of the plan for two residential buildings on the Ilot Saint-Vincent-de-Paul site. The Dufferin-Morency autoroute is at the bottom left.

said in a statement.

Marchand said it's not certain how much funding the city or other levels of government will contribute to the project, but he was confident construction could start next year.

Coulombe-Leduc said the adjacent former garage property which the city owns is not part of the project at the moment because of complexities relating to demolition of buildings on the site and decontamination of soil. She said

the city did not want to delay the start of the larger project while awaiting preparation of the neighbouring site.

The 170 units in the two buildings, varying between six and eight storeys, are expected to welcome some 350 new residents to the Old City, which has been a priority for the city. It recently also acquired the nearby site of the former Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague school and Foyer Nazareth with a future housing project in mind.

Boul. Pierre-Bertrand cut off for water pipe replacement

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One of the city's main north-south arteries will be severed for several weeks while workers undertake a major repair job on underground infrastructure.

According to information from the city, the work on Boul. Pierre-Bertrand "is being carried out to remedy a break in one of the pipes which supplies drinking water to some of the city's residents. The complexity of the work arises from the location of the pipe and its manufacturing method, thus requiring the collaboration of several teams with various skills."

The four-lane boulevard is cut off between rues Beaucage and Nolin, with traffic rerouted along Boul. Père-Lelièvre to the west. The city says it will maintain access to businesses and residences in the construction zone.

The street has been closed since Feb. 24 and work is expected to be completed in three to four weeks.

Photo by Peter Black



This barrier greets motorists on Boul. Pierre Bertrand at Rue Beaucage. Workers are replacing damaged water pipes.



MEMORIALS AND THINGS OF FAME

Researched and compiled by Lorie Pierce, Lorie@qctonline.com

March 4, 1784 - *The Quebec Gazette*

On Thursday last at eight o'clock was observed a comet in its course to the sun; it was about twenty degrees high, being about west southwest; the tail appeared to contain an arch in the heavens of about three degrees. Sunday night at eight o'clock, being clear weather, it was seen considerably advanced towards the sun, but the splendour of its tail was obscured by that of the moon, whole distance from the comet appeared to be about eleven degrees. We expect it will, in a few nights, be in its perihelium, after which it will, in all probability, make a most splendid appearance in the morning before day break, when those whose curiosity and admiration, at the grandeur of such an appearance, exceed their inclination to lounge in bed, will have an opportunity of observing this curious phenomenon. We leave it to those who have had an opportunity of observing this comet more accurately, to determine whether we may hail it as a stranger, or one that has been observed before from our earth. We are inclined to adopt the first opinion.

March 4, 1874 - *The Morning Chronicle*

Danger - Pedestrians must be on the *qui vive* as they perambulate our streets, as

many thoughtless citizens have dug most dangerous holes opposite their doors, which, to the unwary walker at night, in our badly lighted streets, will be productive of many accidents.

March 8, 1899 - *The Quebec Chronicle and Gazette*

New Hotel For St. Roch's movement is on foot to establish a large hotel in St. Roch's. The promoters of the scheme point out that in view of the great amount of business done in that important part of the city, there is a demand for a hotel that will serve the requirements of the commercial and travelling public. It is certain that Québec is on the eve of a great revival, and the establishment of a hotel in the heart of St. Roch's will help it to participate in the appreciation of the real estate and the improvements of trade generally.

March 3, 1924 - *The Quebec Chronicle*

Harbour Commission Making Alterations To Accommodate Two Cunard Liners

The navigations season is drawing near and the Quebec Harbour Commission have redoubled their efforts to complete the various alterations required by May 1st. At the present time, nearly two hundred workmen are busy

on the Louise Docks. Alterations to Shed 29 are occupying a good deal of attention. Inside the shed, offices are being constructed to accommodate officials of the Cunard Line, for in future the two Cunard liners "*Caronia*" and "*Carmania*" will make Québec their western terminus.

March 7, 1959 - *The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*

Young Skiers Test Skills On Plains

Québec's young boy and girl skiers, who have followed the "learn to ski" program conducted by the Popular Ski Course Society since early winter, undergo their biggest test tomorrow afternoon when the Society climaxes its seasonal activities, staging a giant slalom on the Plains of Abraham. A field of 333 youngsters, ranging in age from nine to 14, is prepared to accept the official starting signal at 2 o'clock. Scheduled to make the initial descent is Pierre Lavoie, a young hickory artist who last year took top honours in "A" division. ... Mayor Wilfrid Hamel is expected to preside over the prize presentation which will take place immediately following completion of the meet.

This competition, which is being staged for a fourth consecutive year by the Society should arouse big interest among all ski enthusiasts, especially the youngsters' parents. Like in past

years, it will also prove a tribute to the group of 30 instructors that has accomplished a great job in preparing the large number of youngsters for their most important showing. ... The field has been divided into three divisions ... according to the skier's experience. Each skier must show his skill and style in a single run. It is hoped that the entire field will have completed the course by 3:30. More than 150 prizes, many of them donated by civic authorities, will be distributed among the best performers.

March 6, 1964 - *The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*

[Inuit] Transfer Gets Agreement

The Canadian and Québec governments seem to have agreed in principle over transferring administrative responsibilities for the 2,500 [Inuit] of Ungava to the province of Québec. Following Sunday's long eight-hour meeting held *in camera* at the Québec legislature, Natural Resources Minister René Lévesque and Arthur Laing, federal minister of northern affairs, told reporters "considerable progress had been made." Reading a prepared statement they said certain recommendations will be made to "our respective governments" on the following matters:

1. The method by which the [Inuit] are to be consulted prior to the finalization of an agreement of transfer.

2. The principles and basic conditions which will serve to protect the rights and interests of the [Inuit].

3. The establishment of a committee to which is given the task of preparing a draft agreement.

"Among the matters still outstanding before the general agreement can be concluded are the financial agreements between the two governments."

The results of the meeting were in contrast to a stormy meeting on the same subject at Ottawa last month. Québec officials had reacted angrily to a federal suggestion that a referendum be held to get the [Inuit] point of view. ... The transfer of the [Inuit] to the province is necessary, said Mr. Lévesque, so that the [Inuit] can participate in the economic development of Québec.

Editor's note: Articles from the archives are reproduced with the original vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Explanatory notes may be added.



City offers microchipping clinics for pet owners

ADAPTED FROM A PRESS
RELEASE BY QCT STAFF

The Ville de Québec announces two upcoming microchipping clinics for cats and dogs residing on its territory, in

partnership with Micropuce Québec. These events aim to promote the safety of pets by facilitating their identification in the event they go missing.

Since January 2022, microchipping is mandatory for cats and recommended for dogs

in Quebec. This procedure, simple, quick and safe for the animal, consists of the implantation of an electronic chip under the skin of the animal, ensuring permanent identification.

The next microchipping clinics will take place on **April 7**

for cats and **June 2** for dogs. The rate of **\$37 per animal** also includes registration, which is currently mandatory for dogs and will be mandatory for cats as of March 20.

“Microchipping is an effective way to protect our pets and encourage their return

home in the event of loss,” stated Coun. Bianca Dussault, member of the executive committee responsible for animal control. “We encourage all pet owners to take advantage of this opportunity to ensure the safety and well-being of their four-legged friends while mak-

ing significant savings.”

Owners must register online before the event. Only those residing in the city and having registered their animal will be able to benefit from this service.

Navigating Expo Habitat to create your ideal home

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Expo Habitat, held at Expo Cité from Feb. 22 to 25, is a dedicated exhibition focusing on housing and the art of living. Whether you're looking to buy, sell, renovate, restore or simply decorate your home, Expo Habitat offers a wealth of inspiration.

Expo Habitat is like a treasure chest brimming with ideas to reimagine living space, combining style and functionality. As you wander through each booth, your imagination ignites, and your ideas develop from dreams to tangible reality.

One of the established exhibits at the annual expo is the Maison Enfant Soleil, constructed by Bonville. This year, the house is named “Charles-Édouard” in honour

“Decor is the clothing of a home. It's what makes it feel lived-in, loved, and uniquely yours.” ~ William Yeoward

of a remarkable 12-year-old. Charles-Édouard has a benign, inoperable brain tumour that threatens his vision. The secondary bedroom in the house has been decorated to reflect Charles-Édouard's preferences, with a strong emphasis on music and vibrant red accents, his favourite colour.

Corcoran Importation is a wholesaler specializing in raw solid wood furniture. The company's expertise lies in crafting flat-surface furniture. Combining tree slabs with epoxy resin produces a stunning, river-like effect. One of the standout pieces was a wooden table adorned with a golf-themed insert, complete with an iron, ball, tee, and glove ... what a

conversation piece!

Animal enthusiasts rejoiced upon discovering that Mercier's Generations Intact 2500 finish is meticulously crafted to add extra protection to wood floors, so they stand up to intense traffic with increased resistance to surface scratches caused by your pets' nails, ensuring that your flooring maintains its original appearance.

Three hundred exhibitors were present at this event, which included 12 kitchens, three houses, a van-life bus, heating systems, windows, doors, land for sale and outdoor amenities such as barbecue grills, swimming pools, patios and landscaping ideas. Experts from Hydro-Québec, Desjardins, the Régie du Bâtiment du Québec and other organizations were on hand to answer specific legal, regulatory and design questions.



Photo by Lise Lafond

Geneviève Martel and her team at Les Tuiles Martel have put in considerable effort to design a decorative trailer that displays many of the products they offer to enhance your outdoor space. Their motto, “From our family's backyard to yours,” reflects their commitment to their clients.

COTTAGE FOR SALE

PANORAMIC VIEWS



Nestled along Brackley Bay Shores, in Prince Edward Island, this unique waterfront retreat, at 76 Shoreline Drive, West Covehead, is a cozy haven with stunning panoramic views of sparkling waters and sunsets. Originally two lots, the owners combined them for 200 feet of waterfront and increased privacy. The lot is surrounded by trees and is perfect for kayaking and boating. Built by Ken Coles Construction, the cottage features three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a large open plan living room – dining room with kitchen, large artist's studio, play/sleeping loft and screened porch.

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Provincewide forum seeks local youth perspectives

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Provincewide civic participation organization Youth 4 Youth Québec (Y4Y) is seeking young people aged 16-30 from the English-speaking community of the Capitale-Nationale region to participate in its annual youth forum in Montreal on March 15.

Youth are encouraged to attend the forum in person at the Concordia Conference Centre on the campus of Concordia University in Montreal, but those who cannot or would rather not make the trip in person will be able to participate online. Participants from Montreal, the Gaspé region, the Lower North Shore and the Centre-du-Québec region are among those expected to take part.

Y4Y executive director Adrienne Winrow said the forum represented a precious opportunity for English-speaking youth from across the province

to talk to each other and to share their concerns with representatives of the provincial Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers, the federal Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and other organizations that support the civic participation of both French- and English-speaking young adults, including Elections Canada. Youth talent will also be on full display with an onsite art exhibit and panel discussions.

“We have put together three youth-led panels on education, the job market and civic engagement, and we want to hear what you think,” Winrow told the *QCT*. “We want to hear from youth who are in high school, CEGEP or university or who have already started their career path. We want to show the community's diversity and strength.”

She noted that in policy discussions about Quebec's English-speaking community, “the focus is often placed on Montreal, but we are stronger if we understand the realities across distances. There is a wide range of different social

and economic realities between Montreal and the Gaspé or the Abitibi, for example. If you want to study in English and you're from the Gaspé or the Abitibi, that means leaving home at 17 – which is obviously much different from growing up in Montreal and being able to live at home and take the bus to school. [The forum] is a networking opportunity, but also a learning opportunity... My hope is that youth come away from the forum feeling like they are part of something larger.”

Winrow said she is looking forward to hearing the conversations between youth from different regions and between youth and representatives of government bodies. “What is going to be on full display is the potential and professionalism and willingness to engage, of youth in this province. English-speaking youth are a resource for the community, they want to contribute and they are thoughtful about the future.”

To register or learn more, visit y4yquebec.org/youth-forum-2024.

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(Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph Corporation Inc.)

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Quebec City, QC G1S 2P1

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Deposited at Quebec City RVU
ISSN no. 0226-9252

We acknowledge the support of the Government of Canada.

REVUEW

Mike James Ross launches *Intention: The Surprising Psychology of High Performers*

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The 50 or so people in College Hall at the Morrin Centre on Feb. 19 hung on every word as Mike James Ross spoke about his book *Intention: The Surprising Psychology of High Performers*, which he co-wrote with Sekoul Theodor Krastev and Dan Pilat.

Ross is the chief human resources officer for Simons stores, where he helps over 5,000 employees be the best they can be. Peter Simons, former CEO turned chief merchant of the family-owned company, interviewed Ross at the launch. It was obvious the two were close friends and colleagues as they chatted about how the book came to be written.

Krastev and Pilat are co-founders of The Decision Lab, an applied behavioural science firm helping large organizations unlock social impact. Their work has been featured in peer-reviewed journals, conferences and outlets worldwide. During the launch, Ross explained that Krastev and Pi-



Peter Simons listens as Mike James Ross reads an excerpt from his book *Intention: The Surprising Psychology of High Performers*.

lat had contacted him to work with them to produce this very engaging book.

The 275-page tome borrows from a wide variety of disciplines – philosophy, psychology, religion, neuroscience and organizational management – and focuses on five key ingredients of intention – willpower, curiosity, integrity, attention

and habits, which are divided into a total of 30 chapters.

Ross explained, “This book will provide you with the tools you need to build your intentionality muscle and help you overcome the languishing of modern life. It isn’t a set of rules for how we should live; it’s a call to action to choose to live the way we were meant

to – and in doing so, realize our potential as high performers while enjoying the satisfactions of an intentional life.”

He fielded many questions from the audience at the end of the presentation.

The book is available at La Maison Anglaise bookstore in Place de la Cité and via Amazon.



Mike James Ross was kept busy signing copies of his book purchased by many of the people who attended the launch at the Morrin Centre on Feb. 19.

Pound for a Claus drums up funds for Community Christmas Hamper Campaign



Photo by Alain Bilodeau

Pound for a Claus, a Community Christmas Hamper Campaign fundraising event, drew some 20 people to the Quebec High School gymnasium for a rock-out workout on Feb. 18. Workout leaders Marie-Li Laprise, Vivian Yatabe, Melanie-Anne Bousquet (master trainer), Jennie Bouchard and Andréanne Dionne had the group working up a sweat to the beat of pounding drumsticks. The event was originally scheduled to take place in December but was postponed because school staff were on strike at the time.

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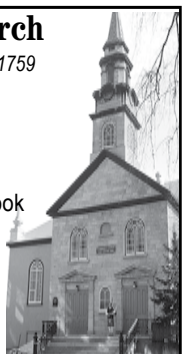
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Local newspapers produce game-changing coverage

“We have boots on the ground, and often our stories get picked up by larger media.”

Nikki Mantell, publisher, Low Down to Hull and Back News

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS do a lot with a little. The result is game-changing coverage that not only informs the immediate regions they serve, but reflects the issues that contribute to the public conversations on a provincial and national scale.

While large media outlets were debating the possible ramifications of Bill 21, Quebec’s so-called secularism law that prohibits civil servants and other public-sector workers from wearing religious clothing or jewelry, the editor of *The Low Down to Hull and Back News* was interviewing Grade 3 teacher, Fatemeh Anvari, in the little town of Chelsea, Que., in the Outaouais region. She had just been fired for wearing a hijab.

“That’s one of the stories that wouldn’t get picked up if we wouldn’t do them,” said *The Low Down’s* publisher Nikki Mantell.

The story, broken by a newsroom with a staff of three, was picked up by the *Ottawa Citizen*, *The Globe and Mail*, the *National Post* and international outlets, including *Newsweek* and *The Guardian*.

It put a human face on Quebec’s often-virulent secularism debate. And, as Mantell put it, “changed the discourse.”

Mantell continued: “Before *The Low Down* published Ms. Fatemeh’s story, support for Bill 21 was hovering around 64 per cent. Following the story, which every major news outlet in Canada picked up, support for the bill dropped to 55 per cent.”

In another corner of the province, in the Vaudreuil-Soulanges region west of Montreal, when Bill 96 threatened to strip small bilingual towns of their dual-language status, the mayor of one of those tiny communities appeared set to let the deadline for the municipal council to affirm its will to keep the status expire. The local English-language paper in the region, *The 1019 Report*, questioned the mayor. On repeated occasions that spanned months, the mayor refused to commit whether council would vote on the needed resolution.

In response to the coverage, residents in the tiny town of 120 grew concerned. Two reporters with *The 1019 Report* started working the phones and going door to door. By the time they were done, the paper reported on the results of an exhaustive survey: a clear majority of residents of the island community of Île Cadieux wanted the town to keep its official bilingual status.

“Most of the residents credit the paper” when the resolution was finally renewed, said *The 1019 Report’s* editor Brenda O’Farrell, adding that large media outlets would never have bothered to do the legwork.

“We spread ourselves thin. We work really hard. And we’re good at stretching a buck,” said Mantell. “We put our hearts and souls into this.”

This is the type of journalism the Local Journalism Initiative helps produce. The federal funding program provides resources to hire journalists who produce civic content – coverage of health, education, rights, public policy and other essential issues.

It also ensures that members of Quebec’s English-speaking community continue to be informed. As Lily Ryan, publisher of *The Aylmer Bulletin* and the *West Quebec Post*, points out, as the province’s language of business and politics is French, English-language papers offer the minority community the opportunity to stay in touch with what is going on in their communities and government decisions.



BY THE NUMBERS

10,815

Number of LJI articles on civic issues produced at QCNA publications between April 2019 and February 2024. SOURCE: QCNA

4

Number of community newspapers launched in Quebec serving the English-speaking community since 2020. SOURCE: QCNA

518

Number of local news operations that closed between 2008 and Feb. 1, 2024. SOURCE: LOCAL NEWS RESEARCH PROJECT

547

The number of job cuts announced by Quebec television network TVA in November 2023. SOURCE: TVA

800

The number of job cuts announced by CBC in December 2023. SOURCE: CBC

1269

Number of media jobs eliminated in Canada during first year of the COVID pandemic. SOURCE: LOCAL NEWS RESEARCH PROJECT

4800

The number of job cuts announced by Bell Media in February 2024. SOURCE: BELL MEDIA



Community newspapers emerging as last journalistic soldiers standing

LAST MONTH, Bell Media announced its largest workforce restructuring in 30 years, laying off 4,800 workers.

In December, CBC/Radio-Canada announced plans to cut 800 jobs.

One month earlier, Quebec television network TVA cut 547 jobs.

Earlier in 2023, Postmedia, one of the largest media companies in Canada with a daily newspaper in almost every major city in the country, announced it was cutting 10 per cent of its staff, just the latest in a long string of downsizing moves that has spanned more than a decade. The cuts planned for Quebec went much deeper.

Almost every month, evidence of the continuing shift in the media landscape can be seen. And the result is fewer and fewer journalists reporting the stories that keep Canadians informed.

But in many communities a singular journalistic soldier remains standing: The community newspaper. These small, often privately-owned outlets are the last providers of reliable, professional local news.

“Community newspapers aren’t just filling the gap, they’re the whole fabric,” said veteran journalist and president of the Quebec Community Newspaper Association Brenda O’Farrell.

That is why support for community newspapers is so important, O’Farrell says. As the media landscape continues to shift, the role these news outlets play is not only crucial, but gaining importance.

And they need to be supported by initiatives like the federal government’s Local Journalism Initiative, O’Farrell explains, referring to the funding program that helps qualified outlets hire reporters in communities across the country. But readers in these communities, have to do their part, too, she added, by subscribing to papers that offer that option, especially in Quebec where the minority-language community needs to maintain access to information in English.

Without programs like LJI and reader support, many community papers would struggle to survive.

Since 2012, journalist Marie-Ève Martel has tracked community news outlet closures across Quebec.

“For the moment, I’ve counted more than 80,” she reported late last year, after the abrupt shuttering of the Montreal daily *Metro* and its offshoots in several Montreal suburbs and Quebec City.

Each closure represents not only jobs lost, but “a hole in our social cement,” as Martel describes it.

Local media “makes us more informed, more aware and more likely to vote,” she said.

“CBC and the *Ottawa Citizen* aren’t going to cover a byelection in Chelsea,” said Nikki Mantell, the publisher of *The Low Down to Hull and Back News*, which covers the small towns in the Gatineau hills. “We have boots on the ground, and often our stories get picked up by larger media.”

“Local papers are where you hear about the most important things — health care, schools, getting your roads paved, the environment,” said Sharon McCully, publisher of *The Record* in Sherbrooke and the *Brome County News*, two papers that cover about 30 municipalities for the English-speaking community in the Eastern Townships. “These are stories that impact people directly.”

“Community newspapers aren’t just filling the gap, they’re the whole fabric.”

Brenda O’Farrell, journalist and QCNA president

REVIEWS

Musical play starts March Break on a good note

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Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, ...? A musical about an oboe who loses his La, and uses puppet-like eyes to bring instruments to life, nearly fell apart after the lead actor had to step down due to health issues just two weeks before performances at Quebec City's Gros Becs Théâtre began.

Actor Valérie Descheneaux learned all the parts in 14 days to replace the lead role of Éloi so the show could go on! Playwright and director Philippe Robert spoke to the QCT on Feb. 20, the day of the première of *Éloi, le hautbois qui avait perdu son La* (*Éloi, the oboe who lost his La*) presented by Théâtre Advienne Que Pourra.

Robert said it was a "bit of a shocker" to lose the original actor, Florence Blain Mbaye, who is the only actor/oboist he knows. The choice was to cancel everything or find someone else. "It's a living art; we work with living people, so we have to face whatever living is (including illness)," said

Robert. The director was "so grateful," calling it "a miracle" that Descheneaux could step in and "do this remarkable job in this short period of time." Descheneaux is a musician but doesn't play the oboe. "But she knows how to make us believe." The children probably wouldn't guess she's air-playing recordings from the previous musician. "It's a little magic trick," said Robert.

The play "starts with the idea that when you hear a symphonic orchestra tuning up, the first note you hear is always the oboe, because its sound is pure, and physically it's central so everyone hears it. I had this idea of an anxious little boy, a little clumsy, and on the day of the performance he loses his La. So the whole harmony between instruments, the musical harmony, but also the human harmony, goes away." This leads Éloi the oboe on a musical journey to find his missing note, meeting other instruments on the way: the snare drum and xylophone with moving eyes, a grumpy French horn and a double bass "actress going downhill," all with their own distinct personalities.



Actor Valérie Descheneaux (right) stepped into the lead oboe role two weeks before the Gros Becs première of this very musical play.

French is a prerequisite to fully understand the play, since there's a lot of word-play and rhyming in the dialogue. "It's like poetry; the idea was to have a text that is also like music," explained Robert. Well-known pieces of orchestral music are played along with original music by composer Ludovic Bonnier

during shadow puppetry. The message overall, said Robert, is that "with human harmony, we can achieve beauty and higher things like music." The oboe on stage representing Éloi is his "old instrument shined up" even if he "didn't have the discipline" to master it. He explained the "energy is different" between a school



Musicians/actors from Philippe Robert's play take a bow: Olivier Maranda (percussion), Anne-Marie Levasseur (actor and horn), Valérie Descheneaux (Éloi the oboe) and Pierre-Alexandre Maranda (double bass).

performance (such as the 210 Grade 1 and 2 students who travelled by bus to the Gros Becs première from schools such as École Internationale de Saint-Sacrement) and a family performance. "When there are adults [in the audience] they hear the puns, the references and other levels of the text and the show at large.

I love family audiences that come during March Break."

The 45-minute harmonious play targeting kids ages four to nine (and their grownups) will be presented until March 10 at Les Gros Becs' temporary location in the Fleur de Lys shopping centre. See lesgrosbecs.qc.ca for more information.

collectif9 takes Club musical audience on an aquatic voyage

SHIRLEY NADEAU
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The audience at the Palais Montcalm was totally immersed in a concert entitled *Vagues et ombres / Waves and Shadows* on Feb. 16 by the collectif9 string ensemble. Literally a collection of nine musicians, the group is comprised of Chloé Chabanole, John Corban, Robert Margaryan and TJ Skinner (violins); Cynthia Blanchon and Xavier Lepage-Braut (violins); Jérémie Cloutier and Andrea Stewart (cellos); and bassist Thibault Bertin-Maghit, who is also the

group's artistic director.

The entire concert felt like a supernatural voyage under the sea. The stage lights were dim as the nonette quietly walked onstage, all dressed in pale white or beige clothing, including their shoes. They plunged themselves into the first of Claude Debussy's works, *La Mer*, arranged by Bertin-Maghit.

The intriguing program included *Contact* by Canadian-American composer Luna Pearl Woolf, which evoked the underwater sounds of belugas crying out to their calves among the noise of passing ships.

Tom Morrison's eerie *Sea Change* entirely captivated the audience's attention as the musicians drew unique and rare sounds from their instruments.

The concert ended as it began with a third excerpt from Debussy's *La Mer* and his well-known "Clair de lune."

Mere Phantoms projected images of aquatic plants and sea creatures on a large screen behind the musicians, and blue stage lighting added an underwater dimension to the concert.

This performance was part of the 2023-2024 Échos du Territoire series by the Club musical de Québec, which is



The collectif9, a nine-member string ensemble from Montreal, present their immersive concert of *Waves and Shadows* at the Palais Montcalm on Feb. 16.

dedicated to recitals and musical projects by established and emerging Quebec and

Canadian artists.

For details of upcoming concerts, visit

clubmusicaldequebec.com.

OSQ presentes Dvořák's New World Symphony

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Feb. 18, was a lovely day to attend a concert by the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec at the Grand Théâtre, directed by renowned Japanese conductor Nodaka Okisawa.

The program opened with the "Moldau" movement of Czech composer Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)'s symphonic poem *My Fatherland* which evokes the flow of the Moldau River through his country.

The program continued with award-winning French classical cellist Edgar Moreau, who played Austrian composer Erich Korngold's Cello Concerto

and Ernest Bloch's three short pieces *From Jewish Life*.

The *pièce de résistance* of the evening came after intermission.

The Symphony No. 9 in E minor, which Czech composer Antonín Dvořák subtitled "From the New World" and is now popularly known as the *New World Symphony*, was composed in 1893 while he was the director of the National Conservatory of Music of America from 1892 to 1895.

Dvořák's composition premiered in New York City in 1893 and is one of the most popular of all symphonies. Astronaut Neil Armstrong liked it so much that he took a recording of the *New World Symphony* along with him



French classical cellist Edgar Moreau and Japanese conductor Nodaka Okisawa congratulate each other after Moreau's performance with the OSQ. The orchestra alone then launched into the amazing *New World Symphony* by Antonín Dvořák.

during the Apollo 11 mission which included the first Moon landing, in 1969.

Dvořák was much influenced

by Native American music and the African-American spirituals he heard in North America. This particularly appears in the

second movement, or *Largo*, as the tune of the African-American spiritual "Steal Away" is clearly heard.



REVIEWS

International musicians perform at Club musical concert

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Classical music enthusiasts filled the Palais Montcalm concert hall on Feb. 11 for the Club musical de Québec concert featuring Russian pianist Alexander Melnikov, German violinist Isabelle Faust and French cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras, who performed works by Robert Schumann, Elliott Carter and Johannes Brahms.

The concert included a pre-show lecture about the lives and works of the three composers. Audience members learned about how Schumann found inspiration in his challenging life to create romantic masterpieces; how the young Brahms' friendship with Schumann and his wife Clara inspired him to compose his trio for piano, violin and cello; and how it took Carter 90 years

to create his works inspired by the 20th century.

Faust, Melnikov and Queyras opened the concert with Schumann's highly emotional Trio for piano, violin and cello, No. 2 in F major, op. 80, written in 1847. The three musicians moved with the music and felt every note. After learning about the loss of the Schumanns' one-year-old son Emil during the pre-show lecture, one could imagine Robert and Clara's grief in the foreground with the sounds of life moving on in the background. The piece starts with light touches and becomes more and more aggressive as it moves into the second movement. The notes seem to explode under the fingers of the musicians. The third movement acts as a bridge into the fourth movement, where Schumann guides the musicians to a satisfactory ending. It was an outstanding performance.

Faust, Melnikov and Queyras

then jumped 150 years ahead to 2012, when American ultra-modernist composer Elliott Carter finished his final oeuvre just months before he died at the age of 103. *Epigrams* for violin, cello and piano is a series of 12 movements that are seemingly better suited as a science-fiction movie score. The long, high-pitched notes of the cello and violin interrupted by well-placed piano notes remind spectators of eerie moments on the silver screen. Toward the end of *Epigrams*, the pace increases, creating more intrigue. It was clear that this incredible masterpiece was composed by someone who had witnessed and experienced the entire 20th century. Faust, Melnikov and Queyras did it justice.

After intermission, Faust, Melnikov and Queyras performed Brahms' joyfully energetic Trio for piano, violin and cello No. 1 in B major, op. 8. Brahms composed this



Photo by Cassandra Kerwin

German violinist Isabelle Faust, Russian pianist Alexander Melnikov and French cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras gave an outstanding concert at the Palais Montcalm on Feb. 11 as part of the Club musical concert series.

piece during the early months of his relationship with the Schumanns in 1853-54 when Brahms, then 20, had been spending much of his time in their family home filled with

children, music and creativity. Through the performance, spectators felt Brahms' positive energy, even 170 years later.

When the concert concluded,

Faust, Melnikov and Queyras received a long and well-deserved standing ovation, after which they generously played an encore.

Two orchestras and a choir perform an outstanding symphony

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It was practically standing room only onstage at the Grand Théâtre on Feb. 28 as the Orchestre symphonique de Québec was joined by the National Arts Centre (NAC) Orchestra from Ottawa and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, directed by Alexander Shelley.

The stage had to be extended both at the back and

the front to accommodate the approximately 200 musicians. Some concertgoers who had purchased tickets in Row D (known for its extra legroom) were surprised to find themselves sitting just below the front of the stage.

The evening opened with award-winning Canadian composer Kelly-Marie Murphy's *Dark Stars, Bright Nights, Vast Universe* which was commissioned by the NAC Orchestra in 2023 as a response to

Richard Strauss's iconic tone poem, *Don Juan*. Murphy was inspired by Vincent van Gogh's painting *Starry Night* to create the ethereal work which she describes as a "modern sonic tapestry."

Another award-winning musician, 18-year-old Canadian pianist Kevin Chen, then joined forces with the orchestra to play Camille Saint-Saëns' breathtaking Piano Concerto No. 2 ... a match made in classical music heaven.

After a brief intermission, the 98-voice Toronto Mendelssohn Choir joined the two orchestras onstage to sing Quebec composer Jacques Hétu's Symphony No. 5, which

portrays Paris before, during and after the 1940 Nazi invasion and ends with a choral setting of Paul Éluard's poem *Liberté*, celebrating the liberation of the French capital

from four long years of German occupation. Hétu died just three weeks before the world première of this epic work by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 2010.



Photo by Shirley Nadeau

The musicians of the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, the National Arts Centre Orchestra and the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir (barely visible behind the musicians) prepared by artistic director Jean-Sébastien Vallée (left) and directed by Alexander Shelley (right), take a bow at the end of their outstanding performance at the Grand Théâtre.



Photo by Shirley Nadeau

Canadian pianist Kevin Chen wowed the audience with his breathtaking rendition of Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2.

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REVIEW

OSQ presents Beethoven's 7th at Palais Montcalm

SHIRLEY NADEAU
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The Orchestre symphonique de Québec, led by music director Clemens Schuldt, presented a dazzling rendition of Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 to a sold-out audience at the Palais Montcalm on Feb. 21.

The concert opened with Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály's lively Gypsy-like *Dances from Galanta*, which the orchestra played with zest and enthusiasm.

American concert pianist Michelle Cann then paid tribute to Florence B. Price, the first African-American woman to create a symphonic composition, a Piano Concerto in three movements. As an

encore, Cann treated the audience to a fiery rendition of Trinidadian jazz and classical pianist and singer Hazel Scott's arrangement of Rachmaninov's Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 3, No. 2.

During a pre-concert interview with OSQ director of marketing and communications Carl Langelier, who translated Cann's words from English to French for the benefit of the mainly francophone audience, she spoke about her career and love of music by Price, Scott and other Black female composers.

After a brief intermission, the orchestra took the audience on a whirlwind tour with Beethoven, who asserted his excessive ambitions from the very first bars of his renowned Symphony No. 7. Schuldt was

in his glory as he passionately directed the musicians in this composition, which, he explained to the audience beforehand, "We Germans never get tired of. It's like a drug for us!"

Composed by Beethoven between 1811 and 1812, while he was improving his health in the Bohemian spa town of Teplitz, it premiered in December 1813 at the University of Vienna. The composer himself remarked at the time that he felt it was one of his best works. The second movement, "Allegretto," was so popular that the 1813 audience demanded an encore.

True to Schuldt's promise to offer surprises at every concert, he also ended with a short encore, a composition by Joseph Bologne de Saint-Georges (1745-1799), a biracial French violinist, conductor, composer



American pianist Michelle Cann receives rousing applause from the audience at the Palais Montcalm after her performance of Florence Price's Piano Concerto. OSQ music director Clemens Schuldt stands behind the orchestra on the far left.

and soldier who was known at the time as the "Black Mozart."

The icing on the cake was a post-concert "jam session" in

the Madame Belley bar of the Palais Montcalm, where Cann played jazzed-up versions of pieces by famous composers

and was even joined at the keyboard by Schuldt for a four-handed version of one of them.

PINION An old killer returns: measles

PAULINE KERR
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Anyone planning to travel over March Break is being advised to make sure they and their children are properly immunized. We're not talking about visiting some exotic (exotic being a euphemism for remote and presumably primitive) location – we're talking south Florida. And we're not talking about a rare, new disease; we're talking about measles.

Those of us who are of a certain age acquired immunity to the disease the hard way – by having it. And we were sick, make no mistake. There was more to measles than spots and a bit of a fever. The fever

can be very high, and the child develops a cough, pinkeye and a runny nose as well as feeling achy and listless.

Although measles was once a common childhood disease, it was never a benign one. Thousands died in North America in the first few decades of the 20th century. About one to three of every 1,000 children infected will die from respiratory or neurological complications. The disease can also cause blindness.

Thanks to the measles vaccine that became available in 1963, the disease was eliminated from North America at one point. Not anymore.

The reason why measles is spreading so rapidly is in part due to the nature of the virus.

Measles has been described as one of the most infectious diseases known to humanity; an estimated nine out of 10 unprotected people exposed to the virus will contract it. It is spread by coughing or talking. Even being in the same room with someone with measles puts the unprotected person in danger. Of the people who contract it, a substantial number will end up hospitalized.

Measles is so infectious that it took a very effective vaccine – which we have – and a very high rate of immunization – which we used to have – to get it under control.

What happened? This is another one we can blame on COVID-19, at least partly. From 2020 to 2022, a lot of people missed their measles

immunizations, and the end of COVID restrictions meant we resumed international travel with a vengeance.

But the problem started before that, with a disgraced British doctor, Andrew Wakefield, who published a biased and unscientific study in 1998, fraudulently claiming the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine could cause autism. No matter that both he and his study were completely discredited – Wakefield's study got a certain following on social media, and it doesn't take much of a following for that high immunization rate to fall below that crucial 95 per cent, at which point local outbreaks occur, considering the vaccine cannot be given to children who are immunocompromised.

It should be noted that Wakefield, who is no longer a doctor, moved to the United States and has become the poster boy for the anti-vaccination movement.

And measles is back, thanks to Wakefield and COVID.

On March 4, Quebec public health officials reported 10 active cases of measles in the province, of which at least three are linked to international travel. The federal government recommends Canadians travelling outside the country monitor travel health notices for information on measles and rubella outbreaks in other countries.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website reports there are measles outbreaks in literally every

country in the world right now.

CBC reported that measles has "exploded" in Europe. The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that in 2023, there were 42,200 cases in over 40 European countries, with more than 20,000 hospitalizations and at least five deaths in Europe, and urgent action is warranted.

The first action? We have a highly effective vaccine. We do not need to risk our children's lives because of some hare-brained blither on social media that it causes autism. It does not. Wakefield published his "study" in the hope of getting rich, not of preventing autism.

BOOK REVIEW

'Breakaway' Bob McBryde pens book inspired by radio tales

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My Time With You Has Been Short But Very Funny is the title of the collection of personal stories and musings by former CBC Radio columnist and CEGEP Champlain-St. Lawrence teacher Bob McBryde. True to its title, the 124-page volume is indeed short, and funny, but at times dark and sad. Such is life.

McBryde would be familiar to many longtime CBC Radio listeners as "Breakaway Bob" for the weekly segments he did on the afternoon program with host Jacquie Czernin from 1987 to 1997.

(I got to meet Bob at the station, where I was the morning show producer. He would later teach my sons at St. Lawrence.)

McBryde's "radio daze," in fact inspired the book which

was published last summer. As he explained, "Jacquie was a jewel, a joy to work with, and the stories that emerged from close to a decade of weekly live-in-the-studio sessions form the foundation of this modest collection of sketches. Kind listeners often nagged me to publish the stories I told each week."

CBC fans likely will savour McBryde's account of his stint on radio, populated by characters from the not-so-distant past. We learn McBryde got the radio gig because Martin Stringer, the producer at the time, liked the interviews he had done about college theatre productions.

The stories in the book, some 22 of them, peppered with web links like online footnotes, cover a wide swath of McBryde's life experience, most of them centred on the quirks and excesses of his family.

One suspects there is something cathartic at play as McBryde recounts tales of his



Bob McBryde celebrates his 70th birthday in Dijon, France, with sons David and Dan and wife Anne.

father Jim, who, in some dated context may come off as comic, but to today's reader would clearly be characterized as a sexist brute, with a Scottish accent.

To his credit, the author tries to cloak his family's foibles in humour, he is unflinching in targeting their considerable flaws. That he emerged as an enlightened and gentle man – "nauseatingly friendly," in his wife Anne's view – is almost astounding.

McBryde devotes the longest tale in the book to Anne's

father, Jozef Schlenker, an ethnic German who fled the Slovak region of what was then Czechoslovakia in the wake of the 1968 Soviet crackdown, which left 10-year-old Anne traumatized.

"Father," as McBryde learned to call his father-in-law, was another larger-than-life character whose "unique linguistic proclivities and gargantuan idiosyncrasies are an integral part of our family lexicon and folklore; each of us has a favourite Father story to share." *Continued on page 12.*

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Community Calendar of Events

March 2 to 10 – The Ville de Québec offers a host of free activities during **March Break** in collaboration with its partner organizations. Details available at ville.quebec.qc.ca/animee.

March 2 to 10 – March Break! Voir Grand at the Musée national des Beaux-Arts. Soak up the immensity of the starry sky and vast territories with a special program including creative workshops, animated tours, a sleepover movie night (bring your own tent) and family yoga. For details, visit mnbaq.org/activite/la-relache-2024-au-mnbaq.

March 3 to 8 – Cinémas Le Clap presents the 13th **Festival de Cinéma en Famille de Québec** at the Place Ste-Foy and Loretteville locations with 27 films and events for the whole family. For details and tickets, visit fceq.ca.

March 5 to 10 – Salon International de l'auto de Québec / Car Show at the Centre des Foires at ExpoCité with fun and games for all. For details, visit salondelautod-quebec.com.

March 7 to 9 – Igloofest Québec invites cold warriors to gather at Place Jean-Béliveau, in the heart of ExpoCité to thumb their noses at winter, to the rhythm of **Lost Frequencies, Above & Beyond** and **KAYTRANADA**. For details and tickets, visit igloofest.ca/en/quebec.

Friday, March 8 at 2 p.m. and Saturday, March 9 at 10 a.m. – Productions Strada present **BABOUCHE** – fea-

turing clowns who play mysterious instruments such as the bagpipes and cymbalum, juggle magic balls and transform into mosquitoes, for the entire family at the Salle de l'Arquemuse, 151A Rue Saint-François Est. Tickets \$20 adults, children \$10, family discount for four or more, available at lepointdevente.com/billets/babouche.

Until March 10 – The Village Nordik at the Port de Québec is back on Louise Basin. Come and enjoy the ice fishing experience and other fun activities. For opening hours and details, visit villagenordik.portquebec.ca/peche-blanche.

Monday, March 11 at 7:30 p.m. – The Orchestre symphonique des conservatoires presents **Éveil**, directed by **Airat Ichmouratov**. Soloist **Gabrielle Lavoie** (trombone) will play Ichmouratov's *Maslenitsa*, Op. 36, and Chostakovitch's Symphony No. 1, at the Grand Théâtre. For details and tickets, visit conservatoire-quebec.tuxedo-billet.com.

Friday, March 15 – Y4Y Youth Forum on the 9th floor, John Molson Building, 1450 Guy, Concordia Conference Centre in Montréal or online (see article on page 4) y4y-quebec.org/youth-forum-2024.

Saturday, March 16 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. – The 55th annual Shannon Irish Show, organized by the CWL of Shannon, takes place at the Shannon Community Centre, 75 Gosford Road. Doors open one hour before showtimes.

Tickets – \$10 per adult, \$5 per child six-12 years, five and under free – are available **at the door only and cash only**. For information, contact Kerry King at 418-844-0033 (evening).

March 16 to 24 – 42nd Festival International du Film sur l'Art (FIFA) presents an eclectic selection of films dedicated to painting, dance, music and literary life at the MNBAQ. *Obvious, hackers de l'art* opens the festival on March 16, in the presence of director Thibaut Sève and members of the Obvious collective, which uses artificial intelligence as a creative tool. For details, visit lefifa.com/en.

Sunday, March 17 is St. Patrick's Day. To learn about the many Irish-themed activities planned for this year, visit qcpatrick.com/en/festivities. Here are just a few of the highlights:

Sunday, March 17 at 9 a.m. – Raising of the Irish flag at City Hall

Sunday, March 17 from noon to 4 p.m. – Leprechaun scavenger hunt (Rallye des farfadets) in Vieux-Québec

Tuesday, March 19 at 7:30 p.m. – Irish Heritage Quebec presents a talk on the **Irish language with Steve Cameron** and company in McMahon Hall of St. Patrick's Church on Ave. de Salaberry. The presentation will be trilingual, including English, French and Gaelic, ensuring an enriching experience for all.

Saturday, March 23 at 2

p.m. – The 12th Défilé de la St-Patrick parade will make its way through the Montcalm district via Avenue Cartier and into the Old City via Grand Allée and Rue St-Louis.

Wednesday, March 20 at 7 p.m. – The Irish Presence in Ste-Catherine-de-Fossambault since 1820, a conference to celebrate the region's 200th anniversary with music and Irish dancing, takes place at Église de Ste-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier, (2 Rue Jolicoeur). Admission is free but places are limited. For information call 418-875-2758 or [histoircatherineoise@outlook.com](mailto:histoirecatherineoise@outlook.com).

Thursday, March 21, 5 - 7 p.m. – VEQ Spring Fest will be held at Les 3 Brasseurs in Place Laurier. Complimentary nibbles and appetizers will be served. Drinks may be purchased on-site. Please let VEQ know you'll be there by contacting Maria Hoyt at info@veq.ca or 418-683-2366 ext. 221 by March 15.

Friday, March 22 at 7 p.m. – Professors of the Conservatoire de musique de Québec and guests give a free recital at Chalmers-Wesley United Church. Come and hear **Dominique Gagnon** (organ), **Catherine Dallaire** (violin), **Julie Bellavance** (saxophone soprano), **Marie-Claude Binet** (saxophone alto), **Benoît Plourde** (saxophone tenor), **Alain Couët** (saxophone baritone) and **Josée April** (organ). On the program are works by Muffat, Sweelinck, Bach, Brahms, Bédard and Vierne. Note that the 2 p.m. rehearsal is also free and open

Note: If there is a community event you would like to have publicized, please let us know by email at least two weeks in advance (editor@qctonline.com).

to the public.

Friday, March 22 at 7:30 p.m. – L'Harmonie des saisons ensemble (soloists, choir and orchestra playing period instruments) presents J.S. Bach's *Passion According to Saint John* at Église St-Dominique on Grande Allée. For information and tickets (\$40 general admission and other options), visit harmoniedessaisons.org.

March 22 at 7:30 p.m and March 23 at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. – Les As de Choeur theatre group presents the original English-language musical *Little Women* at LaScène Lebourgneuf, 815 Boul. Lebourgneuf. For details and to order tickets (\$27 general, \$22 age 12 and under), visit lesasdechoeur.com.

Saturday, March 23 at 7:30 p.m. – Les Rhapsodes choir presents **Carl Orff's majestic Carmina Burana** in a version for two pianos and percussion. Soprano **Guylaine Girard**, tenor **Louis-Charles Gagnon**, baritone **Hugo Laporte** and the **Maitrise des Petits Chanteurs de Québec** will join the choir, directed by **David Rompré**. *Carmina Burana* will be preceded by **Pierre Mercure's Cantate pour une joie**, a lyrical masterpiece by a great Quebec composer. For details and tickets, visit lesrhapsodes.com.

Until April 1 – Papillons en Fête – a unique experience with thousands of free-flying butterflies in a tropical atmosphere for young and old, at the Centre Jardin Hamel, 6029 Boul. Hamel.

Until April 28 – Manif d'art 11 exhibit *Forces du sommeil – cohabitations des vivants* presents the work of over 100 international, national and local artists in locations in the Saint-Roch, Old Quebec and Saint-Jean-Baptiste districts of Quebec City. For details, visit manifart.org.

Until May 12 – Generations: The Sobey Family and Canadian Art at the Musée national des Beaux-Arts du Québec. This new exhibit focuses on 150 works by renowned artists owned by three generations of the Sobey family. For details, visit mnbaq.org/en/exhibition/generations-1305.

Until Aug. 4 – Réactives: Réveiller l'archive As part of the 100th anniversary of the Ville de Québec archives, **Manif d'art** presents an exhibition featuring the work of three Quebec artists at the Maison Hamel-Bruneau, 2608 Chemin St-Louis. Each artist breathes new life into historical documents and objects, reinventing them from a modern perspective. Open from Wednesday to Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free.

Visit the *Voice of English-speaking Québec website* (veq.ca) for information about events for all ages.

Visit the *Morrin Centre website* (morrin.org) for information about more literary, artistic and educational activities for everyone.

SPORTS

SPORTS

SPORTS

'Dashing through the snow' takes on new meaning this winter

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The Association de Derby d'attelage du Québec (LADAQ) was gearing up for its grand finale of the year, but it seemed Mother Nature had other plans. No snow was in sight and the weather forecast was bleak. The course, which was supposed to be a snowy wonderland, was nothing but sand. The date, March 2, was looming closer, and the event seemed doomed.

City employees in Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier came to the rescue, hauling truckloads of snow onto the course just in time. LADAQ and its fans were overjoyed; the horses were eager, their tack spotless as their winter sleighs glittered.

This discipline demands skill and speed. Each driver must guide their horse, or horses, through a challenging

obstacle course in the fastest time possible. It involved two qualifying rounds and a final jump-off. This is an extreme sport, and safety comes first; each driver must wear a helmet, and all the gear is verified before the race.

The winners of this event were:

AT1 (one horse) preliminary class winner (1:19): Raphaël

"A horse gallops with his lungs, perseveres with his heart, and wins with his character."
~ Federico Tesio

Blouin, (St-Jacques-De-Leeds) with Xilia, a 13-year-old Canadian mare.

AT1 (one horse) intermediate class winner (1:09): Francis Blouin (St-Elzéar de Beauce) with Kipper, an eight-year-old Welsh-Connemara gelding.

AT1 (one horse) Advanced Class winner (1:11): Steve



Photo by Lise Lafond

AT1 preliminary class winner Raphaël Blouin and his mare Xilia are focused on the track.

Marcotte (St-Gilbert) with Pa-poute on the Go, a 12-year-old Canadian quarter-horse mare.

AT2 (two horses) Advanced Class winners (1:21): Alexandre Traversy and navigator Emmanuelle St-Germain (Drummondville) with Lucky,

a 22-year-old Canadian gelding, and Zorro, an 11-year-old Canadian gelding.

At the end of the competition, participants and visitors were welcomed to the Salle Anne-Hébert for the award ceremony.



Photo by Lise Lafond

Mélodie Blouin competes in the AT1 preliminary derby. At just 13 years old, she was the youngest participant. Her horse, 25-year-old Scott, was the oldest horse to race. Her mother and navigator Josée Landry helps to steer the back of the sled around the course by shifting her weight.



Photo by Lise Lafond

Richard Poulin, with Hugo Garmont as navigator, and horses First French Flame and Bonanza Victory Twin, gallop around the obstacles. Thanks to the municipality of Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier, enough snow was added to the course to make the competition possible.

SPORTS

SPORTS

SPORTS

The stage is set for the U Sports basketball Final 8 at the PEPS

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The Amphithéâtre Desjardins at the PEPS of Université Laval will be the scene for the U Sports national men's basketball championship from March 8-10.

Known as the Final 8, the tournament will bring the top seven university teams to Quebec, along with the Rouge et Or, this year's host team. After a loss in the conference semifinal, the home team will

be seeded eighth.

The four conference champions from across the country have qualified for the championship. The University of Victoria Vikes (Canada West) will be the top seed of the championship, while the conference finalists, the Wesmen from the University of Winnipeg, will be seeded seventh.

The Ontario University Athletics (OUA) conference will have three teams in Quebec. The conference champions, the Queen's University Golden Gaels (Kingston) have earned the number two seed for the

weekend. The Brock University Badgers from St. Catharines, OUA finalists, will be the fifth seed. Finally, the University of Ottawa Gee-Gees, who lost to Brock in the conference playoffs, have earned an at-large bid. The Gee-Gees had a regular season record of 19 victories and three losses. Ottawa was ranked third in the last U Sports top ten rankings after the regular season.

The lone Atlantic University Sports (AUS) representatives will be the Dalhousie University Tigers from Halifax, seeded fourth.

Finally, the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ) champions, the Citadins from Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), are seeded third and will join the Rouge et Or as the only teams from Quebec.

The quarterfinal games will be played March 8 starting at 1 p.m., when the Gee-Gees play the Citadins. That game will be followed by the game between the Winnipeg Wesmen and the Queen's Gaels at 3 p.m.

Then, at 6 p.m., a sellout crowd is expected to watch the Rouge et Or play the Victoria Vikes. The Brock Badgers and

the Dalhousie Tigers will close out the first day of activities, with the final tipoff at 8 p.m.

The consolation games between the losing teams of the first day's games will be held at 1 and 3 p.m. on March 9. That will be followed by the national semifinal games at 6 and 8 p.m.

Finally, on March 10, the day will start with the fifth-place game at noon, followed by the bronze-medal game at 3 p.m. and the national championship game at 6 p.m.

Fans wishing to attend the games can buy their tickets online (reservatech.net). The

pass for all 11 tournament games can be purchased for \$155. Fans can also buy session passes (two games) for \$37 for adults and \$25 for students. A special pass for the final day, which includes three games, is available for \$52 for adults and \$39 for students.

U Sports will broadcast every game on the CBC Gem app in English. Radio-Canada will broadcast every game on their website and TVA Sports will broadcast the championship game live on television.

Chase for a playoff spot is on for the Quebec Remparts

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It's unlikely that the Quebec Remparts will repeat as champions of the Memorial Cup this season. In fact, the Remparts are chasing an altogether different objective – to qualify for the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) playoffs.

As of March 3, the Remparts are tied with the Saint John Sea Dogs for ninth place in the Eastern Conference, with 42 points. Both teams have played 59 games, but the Sea Dogs are ahead of Quebec because they have more wins in regulation

(16 to 14) than the defending Memorial Cup champions.

Usually, the top eight teams in each conference qualify for the playoffs. However, if there is a team in ninth place with more points than the team in eighth place in the other conference, that team will qualify.

As of this writing, both Quebec and Saint John have more points than the Val d'Or Foreurs, who are in eighth place in the Western Conference with 35 points.

With nine games remaining in the QMJHL regular season, the race is on for these three teams to get an invitation to the playoffs.

The Remparts, as noted by Kevin Dubé of the *Journal de*

Québec, have not missed the playoffs since 1982-83.

After the team moved in 1985, the Beauport Harfangs (who later became the Remparts) established themselves in the QMJHL but missed the playoffs in three straight years (1991, 1992, 1993). If the Remparts were to miss the postseason this year, it would be the first time since the rebirth of the team.

The Remparts were in action twice last week and ended up on the losing side both times.

In Victoriaville on Feb. 28, the Remparts saw the Tigres score four straight goals before Charles-Olivier Villeneuve found the back of the net for Quebec. The visitors prevailed

4-1.

On March 2, the Remparts visited the Lower St. Lawrence region to play the Rimouski Océanic and their former teammate, goaltender Quentin Miller. Quebec took a 2-0 lead thanks to goals from Nathan Quinn and Julien Béland, but the Océanic replied with three goals, including the winner from former Rempart defenceman Charles Truchon, for a tight 3-2 victory.

This week, the Remparts play three home games at the Videotron Centre. The team hosts Victoriaville on March 6. Two days later, the Gatineau Olympiques will be in town for the first game of a doubleheader. The second



Remparts goaltender Louis-Antoine Denault stopped the puck despite having Rimouski's Mael St-Denis in front of him. Remparts defenceman Antoine Michaud (89) made sure St-Denis didn't go further. Despite this bit of defensive wizardry, the Remparts lost 3-2 on March 2 in Rimouski.

game between the 'Piques and the Remparts is on March 9. Quebec will travel to Baie-Comeau on March 13 to play the Drakkar, one of the hottest teams in Canada.

Meanwhile, the QMJHL an-

nounced on Feb. 23 that starting next season, every team will play a total of 64 games in the regular season. This season, each team will have played a total of 68 regular season games.

High school basketball nearing playoff season

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Playing in the Québec-Chaudière-Appalaches conference of the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ), the basketball teams at St. Patrick's, Quebec and Dollard-Des-Ormeaux (DDO) high schools are completing their 2023-24 seasons with an eye on a regional banner.

The St. Patrick's High School Fighting Irish program has eight teams this season while the Quebec High School Blazers have nine. The DDO Vikings have only one team, but it has performed outstandingly this season.

The DDO Vikings boys team plays in the Bantam Division 4 Level 3. They won their division with a perfect record of 10 wins in 10 games. DDO will host the playoff championship tourna-

ment on March 17.

The Quebec High Blazers teams did their school proud this year, even though not all will make the regional playoffs. With two games remaining, the Blazers senior boys have a 7-2 record in the Division 4 Level 1 schedule. They are assured a place in the playoffs, as the top eight teams qualify.

The Division 4 Level 5 Blazers, currently fourth, are expected to drop in the standings. With only one game remaining between Séminaire St-François and Polyvalente Benoit-Vachon (Sainte-Marie de Beauce), the winners of this game will move ahead of the Blazers and qualify for the playoffs.

The senior girls finished the regular season in third place in Division 4 Level 3. In their quarterfinal game, the Blazers will host École secondaire Les Etchemins on March 13 at 8:15 p.m. at Quebec High.

The junior Blazers girls have had a wonderful season. With two games remaining in Division 4 play, the team has a perfect record of seven wins in seven games.

The junior Blazers boys team will try to solidify their eighth-place position and grab the final Division 3 playoff spot. QHS has only one game remaining and has a 5-6 record.

The bantam Blazers boys team (Division 4 Level 4) finished third. They host École Secondaire de Saint-Marc-des-Carières on March 13 at 6:45 p.m. at QHS to get their playoff campaign underway.

The second Blazers team in the bantam boys age group is also having a great season. Currently in first place in Division 4 Level 1, they have a record of 8-1 with two games to play. QHS will host the division championship on April 6.

The QHS bantam girls Division 4 Level 1 Blazers are

currently in second place with a record of eight wins in eight games. The team has two games left in the regular season.

The Division 4 Level 3 group is currently in ninth place with three victories and six losses. The top eight teams qualify for the playoffs.

At St. Patrick's High, both senior teams have had solid seasons. The senior boys have a record of 6-4 with one game remaining and are currently in fourth place in the Division 4 Level 1 standings.

The senior girls are in first place in Division 3 Level 3 Group B with a record of 10-2 with one more game to play. They will host the playoff championship on March 24.

The junior Irish boys have eight wins and four losses this season. Now in second place in the Division 3 group, they are expected to host a quarterfinal game on March 20.



The Quebec High School Blazers bantam girls (Division 4 Level 1) are currently undefeated this season with eight wins with two games remaining in the regular season.

The junior Irish girls haven't had the same luck. They have one regular-season game remaining and hope to better their 3-6 record.

The Irish bantam girls in Division 4 Level 3 are second with nine wins in 10 games. They have qualified for the semifinal and will play the winners of the quarterfinal game between Polyvalente de Charlesbourg and Séminaire Saint-François on March 16.

The bantam girls of Division 4 Level 1 have three games

remaining. With a record of 5-2, they are in third place. The top six schools qualify for the playoffs.

The bantam boys from St. Patrick's have one game remaining. With a record of 4-7, the team is in ninth place in Division 3.

St. Pat's atoms (secondary one) team has two more games to play on March 12 and 13. Even though they have a 3-9 record and stand in eighth place, there's still hope for the green and white.

'Breakaway' Bob McBryde pens book inspired by radio tales

Continued from page 10.

Other vignettes from a life rich in mishaps, twists of fate and oddball characters include reflections on annoying neighbours, adventures as a golf caddie, a horrific ski accident while a scholarship student in Switzerland, his father's Scottish obsessions,

quitting smoking and musing on the maddening officialdom in France.

McBryde and Anne have called Dijon, France, home since fleeing Canada in the depths of the pandemic. As he explained in an email: "Anne suffers from a neurological condition (trigeminal neural-

gia) that makes mask-wearing excruciatingly painful. So in fall 2021, we decided to move to Sweden, where there were no mask mandates. However, transitioning in France to break up the long trip to Scandinavia, we discovered Dijon, a mere 90 minutes by TGV from Paris, and rented a tiny house

here, supposedly temporarily.

"Anne is a European citizen, so we have a right to live here indefinitely, although we will return to Canada in 2024 in order to be closer to our son who lives in Ottawa."

McBryde, haunted by his own mortality, as he says, took advantage of his "exile" in

France to tackle the project of putting his stories into book form. It has now been translated into French – he and his wife are professional translators – and made available through most book-buying websites. His website (robert-mcbrydeauthor.com) contains more information on his vari-

ous undertakings.

McBryde is currently working on another book of creative nonfiction titled *It's All in the Condiments*.