

Team Hellas Claims World Championship in Puerto Plata, Crowning Montreal's Greek Community with Historic Gold



WBDHF/Davis Photography



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The atmosphere inside the boardroom of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal on the evening of December 2, 2025, was one of barely contained jubilation. Board members, accustomed to deliberations on budgets and community programming, found themselves on their feet, applauding as a group of young men in white jerseys trimmed with the ancient Greek meander pattern filed into the chamber. At the head of the procession stood Peter Chiotis, a member of the Regional Board of Directors Council of Laval and the coach of Team Hellas, hoisting above his head a gleaming silver trophy. Gold medals hung from the necks of the athletes behind him. These were not professional players from Athens or Thessaloniki, but Hellenes and Philhellenes from the neighbourhoods of Montreal, Laval, Chomedey, Park Ex and the West Island, and they had just accomplished what many in the international ball hockey community considered impossible: defeating Canada on its own turf, in its own sport, to claim the gold medal at the 2025 World Ball and Dek Hockey Federation World 4vs4 Championships in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic.

The victory, achieved on November 29, 2025, sent ripples through the Greek

diaspora in Montreal and beyond. Local radio personality Vinny Barrucco of 95.9 Virgin Radio offered his congratulations on air, praising the team for their determination. "I want to say a big, huge congratulations to the Greek Montreal ball hockey team," Vinny announced to his listeners. "They just won the world's biggest and most prestigious ball hockey tournament. That is incredible. So nice to see a group of about 20 Montrealers come together. They travel together. They put their heart and soul into it. And they won." The sentiment captured the essence of what Team Hellas had achieved: a triumph forged not in elite training academies, but in the recreational rinks and community leagues of Greater Montreal.

Coach Peter Chiotis, addressing the Board of Directors at the HCGM headquarters, offered his gratitude in characteristically spiritual terms. "I would like to first thank Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, because only a miracle made this happen," Chiotis declared, his voice thick with emotion. "I want to introduce to you all these players who made our nation proud, showing courage, determination, and love for one another." The roster he then called forward, one by one, represented a cross-section of Montreal's Greek community: twin goalkeepers Christos and Angelos Ekonomakis, captain and leading scorer Panagiotis Karvouniaris, team president Manny Mavroudis, and the clutch shootout specialist Carl Gingras, among others. Several players were connected to Greek heritage through marriage or

family ties, reflecting the inclusive definition of Hellenic identity that has long characterized Montreal's diaspora.

The tournament itself, sanctioned by the World Ball and Dek Hockey Federation, brought together national teams from Canada, Quebec, the United States, Slovakia, Czechia, and a combined North American squad. Unlike the traditional 5vs5 format played on ice hockey arena floors, the 4vs4 game is contested on plastic tile surfaces, emphasizing speed, skill, and rapid transitions. Slovakia and Czechia, nations where ball hockey enjoys semi-professional status with state support, arrived as favourites. Team Quebec, drawn from the province that serves as the global heartland of ball hockey, was considered a powerhouse. Team Canada, perennial champions, featured players with NHL experience. Against this backdrop, Team Hellas entered as heavy underdogs, a self-funded squad of local league veterans who trained together at the PTM facility in Laval.

"It simply started as an idea to join the world stage and be part of a huge 4x4 tournament representing Greece," Chiotis explained in an interview with The Montreal Greek Times. "We are a bunch of friends with great talent who wanted to try it out. We knew we had a huge and difficult task playing the best programs of the world as a whole." The coach, a veteran of Montreal's ball hockey scene with 17 local championships to his name and previous international experience leading the Hellenic Ball Hockey Association Masters team to a World

Championship in Bermuda, assembled his roster without formal tryouts. He selected players he trusted, men who had competed against one another for years in different leagues but had never played together under a single banner.

The tournament's opening match set the tone for what would become a remarkable run. Facing Slovakia, a team whose players receive compensation for their efforts, Greece produced a shock 4-3 victory. "We beat programs that picked best players of their countries," Chiotis later reflected. "We were just a bunch of local friends. This is huge." The following day brought a brutal encounter with Czechia, a 5-2 loss that was less about the scoreline than about the physical toll exacted. Tournament officials reportedly informed team presidents that officiating standards would be adjusted due to the intensity of the match. Greece emerged battered but unbroken.

The psychological low point came in the third group-stage game against Team Quebec. Leading for much of the contest, Greece allowed the match to slip away, eventually falling 4-2. That evening, Chiotis withdrew from the team's social activities, retreating to his hotel room to contemplate tactical adjustments. "That night I locked myself in the room and needed to make a few changes," he recalled. "The team was shocked that I didn't join them." What emerged from that solitary deliberation was a renewed sense of purpose,

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 **Jean Coutu**
 Φαρμακοποιός - ιδιοκτήτρια : Κατερίνα Καραϊνδρου
Νοσοκόμα για μέτρηση πίεσης, σακχάρου
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HELLAS ON TOP: Montreal Greeks Make History in the Dominican Republic

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distilled into a slogan coined by captain Karvouniaris: "Be honest about every shift."

The following morning, as the team bus carried the players toward their match against North America, Chiotis gathered his squad for a speech that would become the stuff of community legend. "Today we're playing two monsters," he told them. "You guys have some kind of a following in Montreal that they're there and they're watching us play. Some of them are very proud for us and some of them are going to be mocking us. I'm a very proud guy and I know in this bus right now we have a couple of players that are simply winners. They don't like losing." The coach challenged his players to decide their own fate. "If you guys want to go back to Montreal and be a laughingstock to certain individuals, then let's make the best out of it. Let's go there, make a fool out of ourselves, and we call it a day. Or let's do what I think you guys are capable of doing."

The response was emphatic. Greece dispatched North America 4-0, then delivered the result that announced their credentials as genuine contenders: a 2-0 shutout of Team Canada. Goalkeepers Christos and Angelos Ekonomakis were imperious, and November 26 was thereafter designated by the team as "National Shutout Day." A 6-2 rout of the United States completed the group stage, sending Greece into the knockout rounds with a 4-2 record and second place overall, trailing only Czechia.

Michael Tzouvadakis, who served as assistant coach, trainer, medical staff, and equipment manager, offered his own perspective on the team's transformation. "We were a bunch of friends who joined this tournament thinking of having fun, while on vacation in a sunny destination," Tzouvadakis wrote

in a statement to The Montreal Greek Times. The reality proved far more demanding. "Did whatever was needed to get the boys to be successful," he noted, summarizing his multifaceted role.

The quarter-final brought a rematch with the United States, dispatched 8-1 in what amounted to a formality. The semi-final, however, offered a chance at redemption against Team Quebec. Trailing 2-0 and facing elimination, Greece mounted a furious comeback. Marino Destounis scored with eight minutes remaining to cut the deficit. With one minute left, Quebec committed a tripping penalty on Karvouniaris. Off the ensuing faceoff, Konstantinos Kakivelis fed Carl Gingras for a one-timer that tied the match. The game proceeded to a shootout, where Gingras again proved decisive, scoring the winner while Christos Ekonomakis turned aside every Quebec attempt.

The gold medal final, contested on November 29, pitted Greece against Canada in a rematch of their group-stage encounter. Tim Langiano opened the scoring for Greece, assisted by team president Mavroudis. Canada equalized immediately and took the lead early in the second period. With two minutes remaining and their championship dreams fading, Greece found an answer. Konstantinos Fragkioudakis pinched forward and found captain Karvouniaris, who buried the tying goal. The shootout that followed became an exercise in nerve and precision. After regulation attempts left the teams deadlocked, Gingras stepped forward once more. His goal secured the championship, triggering scenes of unbridled celebration.

"Only with God we were able to accomplish what we did, cause it wasn't luck, it was divine intervention," Chiotis maintained. The coach's spiritual interpretation found resonance with the community. At the December 2 Board of Directors meeting, the Secretary of



Athletics for the HCGM read a formal letter of congratulations, describing the victory as "a remarkable achievement for all Greeks in Montreal and abroad" and noting that it marked "the first time that Greece participates in a 4x4 Open Category tournament." The letter invited the team to consider the community's sports centre as their home.

HCGM President Basile Angelopoulos placed the achievement in historical context. "I cannot help but remember some wonderful successes which Greece had," he told the assembled gathering. "There was a remarkable success, if you remember, in 2004. And it started, if I am not mistaken, with the European Cup, which the Greek team shocked everyone. During that magical period of 2004, when we were all so proud, the second, of course, was the Olympic success, and the third, even in music, was the year we won the Eurovision." Angelopoulos drew a line connecting those triumphs to the present. "I see this as an interesting symbol, that as we begin our 120th anniversary, this

will be the beginning of many such successes."

The final standings of the Men's Open division told the story of an upset for the ages: Greece claimed gold, Canada silver, Quebec bronze, followed by Czechia, Slovakia, North America, and the United States. For the players who wore the blue and white of Hellas in Puerto Plata, the victory represented something beyond athletic achievement. It affirmed the capacity of a diaspora community, bound by heritage and friendship rather than professional contracts, to compete at the highest level of their sport. The team departed the HCGM boardroom that December evening to the applause of Board members and the cheers of families who had gathered outside, the trophy they carried a tangible symbol of what faith, family, and country could accomplish when channelled through collective effort.

The 2025 WBDHF World 4vs4 Championships concluded on November 29, 2025, in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, with Greece defeating Canada 3-2 in a shootout to claim the gold medal.

Η Γένεσις του Θεανθρώπου και η Κερκόπορτα της Νομοθεσίας



**Χαράλαμπος
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Εκκινών το εν λόγω άρθρο παραθέτω ένα απόσπασμα από τον παμμέγιστο «Παπαδιαμάντη» περί της εννοίας των Χριστουγέννων.

" Προ των σήμερον υλιστών, δαρβινιστών και θετικιστών υπήρξαν οι απαισιόδοξοι, οι ορθολογιστάι και οι κριτικιστάι αλλά παρήλθον προ αυτών ήσαν οι πανθείστοι, αλλ' εξέλιπον. Παρέρχονται, κρύπτονται εν τη σκιά, αφανίζονται, αφού επί βραχύ τέρψωσι τους φιλοκαίνους και τους φιλαναγνώστας δια περιέργου συναυλίας λέξεων και γνωμών. Ο δε Χριστός έμεινε και θα μένη...Ο πόθος της μωράς επιδείξεως, η μανία του καινά εκάστοτε λέγειν, η δοκησιοφία, ο τύφος και η οίσεις άγουσιν εις τας συγχρόνους αθεϊστικάς θεωρίας, από των οποίων τουναντίον απάγει η ειλικρινής και ακραιφνής φιλοσοφική συζήτησις της προ των οφθαλμών ημών κειμένης αληθείας».

Η έλευσις των Χριστουγέννων, της Αγίας τοιαύτης ημέρας Γεννήσεως του Θεανθρώπου, της τεκούσης ελπίδος δια ημάς τους Ορθοδόξους χριστιανούς, καθίσταται οντολογικό ορόσημο, διότι ο Ιησούς εγκαθίδρυσε δια του βίου Του, μία χαρούμενη προοπτική, εναντίον του φυσικού καταναγκασμού της φθοράς του θνησιγενούς μας βίου, εις την οποία

υποκείμεθα, εκόντες άκοντες, συνεπεία της αδυσώπητης επιρροής του πανδαιμόριος χρόνου, επί της κοϊκής μας φύσεως.

Αντί όμως αυτού του σεβασμού προς την ζώσα Ορθόδοξη παράδοσή μας, είδομεν, την σκανδαλώδη κατάργηση των καιρίων διατάξεων δια του νέου ποινικού κώδικα, (Ν. 4619/2019), ήτοι του, προηγουμένως εν ισχύ, άρθρου 198 του Π.Κ- περί κακοβούλου βλασφημίας, του άρθρου 199 του Π.Κ -καθύβριση θρησκευμάτων και του άρθρου 201 – περιύβρισης νεκρών, όπως προβλέπονταν και τιμωρούνταν εις το κεφάλαιο 7 του Ποινικού κώδικα με τίτλο επιβουλή της θρησκευτικής ειρήνης, σε βαθμό πλημμελήματος, με αποτέλεσμα σήμερον να αντιμετωπίζουμε έξαρση, οργανωμένων κακόβουλων και βλάσφημων επιθέσεων κατά της Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας, με βεβήλωση Ιερών Εικόνων συμβόλων, αισχροές ύβρεις και ούτω καθ' εξής, διότι πλέον οι ως άνω ηθικώς αξιόμημπτες και αξιοκατάκριτες πράξεις δεν συνιστούν ποινικό αδίκημα.

Κατάπληξη και απορία δε προκαλεί, η αιτιολογική έκθεση της ως άνω καταργήσεως των επίμαχων διατάξεων, η οποία αναφέρει λιτά το εξής: «καταργούνται....αφού γίνεται γενικώς δεκτό ότι δεν προσβάλλουν κανένα υπαρκτό κοινωνικό μέγεθος και επομένως δεν συνιστούν αξιόποινες πράξεις», μία διάταξη η οποία μόνον θυμηδία προξενεί καθότι το ίδιο το Σύνταγμα καθίσταται

αρρήκτως συνυφασμένο με την Ορθόδοξη παράδοση.

Ως εκ τούτου λοιπόν, η Πολιτεία δια των ως άνω σκόπιμων ενεργειών της, καθιδρύει «κερκόπορτες» εις το μαλακό υπογάστριο της κοινωνίας, δια των οποίων θα εισδύσουν «Δούρειοι ίπποι» οι οποίοι με την σειρά τους θα εγκαταστήσουν βραδυφλεγείς βόμβες, υπό το κέλυφος του αθρήσκου, οι οποίες εν ευθέτω χρόνω, θα αποσταθεροποιήσουν βαθμηδόν, την Ελλάδα, ιδίως κατά την ελαύνουσα περίοδο της εγκαθιδρυθησομένης παγκοσμιοποιήσεως.

Η πίστη προς τον Θεό δεν συνιστά μία πεποίθηση ή συνείδηση ερμηνείας περί του καλού και του κακού, ή, προς τούτοις, ουδόλως αυτή, εξαντλείται σε ιδεολογήματα, ή επιστημονικές σοφιστείες, αλλά αποτελεί κάτι ενδότερο το οποίο ορίζει την υπόσταση του ανθρώπου και τον καθιστά ελεύθερο από οιαδήποτε οντολογική αναγκαιότητα, δοθέντος, ο Τριαδικός Θεός αποτελεί τον πλάστη του σύμπαντος.

Ασφαλώς και η ζώσα Ορθόδοξη παράδοση μας, εναγκαλίζεται με τον εθνοαπελευθερωτικό αγώνα, θεμελιώνοντας την κεντρική συνιστώσα του, εξ ου και το περίφημο «Υπέρ Πίστewς και Πατρίδας», τα αναφέρω τούτα, ίνα καταδείξω ότι το Ορθόδοξο Δόγμα εδράζεται σε θεμελιώδες απαρασάλευτες διαχρονικές αρχές οι οποίες κληροδοτούνται εις τους αιώνες των αιώνων, ως παρακαταθήκη του Θεού, πλην όμως, ο ίδιος ο Χριστός έχει απόλυτη βούληση, ελευθερία ίνα ενεργήσει δεόντος και να επέμ-

βει ουσιαστικά εις την πεπρασμένη ζωή μας, δια της Χάριτός Του.

Η Θεολογική επιστήμη, συνιστά ένα εργαλείο ερμηνείας, της ιστορικής, της πολιτειακής, και της δογματικής διαστάσεως του Εκκλησιαστικού γεγονότος της Ορθοδόξου παραδόσεως, ή άλλως συνιστά ένα ευέλικτο καλειδοσκόπιο επισκοπήσεως των πολυποίκλων διατάξεων της Εκκλησίας, υπό το πρίσμα το δογματικό, το ιστορικό, το κοινωνικό και το πολιτικό.

"Όμως σήμερον, επί μάλλον και μάλλον, η έννοια της πίστewς, καθίσταται ιδιαίτερα επίκαιρη, διότι αποτελεί το μέσο αντιμετώπισεως των βιούμενων δυσμενών καταστάσεων, οίτινες, ενώ φαίνονται ότι έχουν αμιγώς ανθρώπινα κίνητρα, πλην όμως εάν αποκωδικοποιησει κανείς πιο προσεκτικά τις εξελίξεις και τα τεκταινόμενα αντιλαμβάνεται ότι υπάρχουν ορισμένες «σκοτεινές» πνευματικές παρσकुνιακές, δυνάμεις οι οποίες, εν τέλει, δεσπόζουν και εν κατακλείδι, κινούν τα νήματα επιδιώκοντας να αμαυρώσουν το εκ Θεού κατ' εικόνα πλασμένο ανθρώπινο πρόσωπο.

Το γε νυν έχον, παρά ταύτα, ας προσπέσουμε γονυκλινείς και ας ψάλλουμε ευφροσύνως και εν κατανύξει, ο Χριστός Ετέχθη, εν σπηλαίω, δια την ημετέρα Σωτηρία.

Χαράλαμπος Β Κατσιβαρδάς
Δικηγόρος Παρ' Αρείω Πάγω
και του Σ.τ.Ε
Ανεξάρτητος Βουλευτής.



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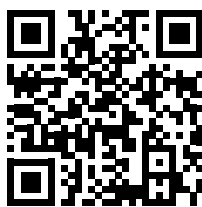
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Senate moves to designate March as Hellenic Heritage Month



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The sober atmosphere of the Senate of Canada was recently transformed into a vibrant forum of history and cultural pride as parliamentarians debated Bill S-220, the Hellenic Heritage Month Act. Sponsored in the Upper Chamber by Senator Tony Loffreda, an Independent Senator from Quebec, this legislation seeks to designate the month of March as a permanent, national observance honoring the significant contributions of Greek Canadians. The debate within the Red Chamber transcended typical partisan discourse and evolved into a profound reflection on the roots of Western democracy and the enduring legacy of a community that has woven itself into the very fabric of Canadian society. This federal initiative follows the successful adoption of similar legislation in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec to signal a long-awaited national acknowledgment of the Hellenic spirit that has thrived on these shores for over a century.

The "Mother" of the Bill: Annie Koutrakis

While the current applause rings through the Senate, the legislative journey of this act began years prior in the House of Commons through the persistent efforts of the Honourable Annie Koutrakis, Member of Parliament for Vimy. The parliamentary record shows that the initiative to secure federal recognition for Hellenic Heritage Month was first formally introduced by MP Koutrakis on March 22, 2021, when she tabled Bill C-276. Her vision was to elevate the recognition achieved at the provincial level to a national standard, ensuring that the contributions of Greek Canadians were celebrated from coast to coast. However, the path to passing this legislation proved to be a test of endurance against procedural hurdles and the unpredictability of political cycles. Shortly after the introduction of Bill C-276, the dissolution of Parliament for the general election caused all active bills, including C-276, to die on the Order Paper.

When Parliament resumed, the legislative landscape had shifted for MP Koutrakis due to her appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport. Under the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, members holding such executive roles are precluded from sponsoring Private Member's Bills, creating a procedural impasse for the re-introduction of the act she had championed. Committed to seeing the designation

realized, Koutrakis navigated this constraint by turning her sights to the Senate. She initially reached out to Senator Leo Housakos to carry the torch in the Upper Chamber, a collaboration that resulted in the introduction of Bill S-259 in November 2022. Although that session also concluded before the bill could receive Royal Assent, the resolve to pass the legislation remained unbroken.

The breakthrough for the current session was achieved when MP Koutrakis approached Senator Housakos to discuss the reintroduction of the bill. In a move reflecting true bipartisan cooperation, the strategy was adjusted to have Senator Tony Loffreda act as the sponsor, with Senator Housakos offering his full support as the seconder. This pivotal agreement secured the bill's third introduction, ensuring that the groundwork laid in 2021 was preserved and advanced, culminating in the debates now taking place in Ottawa.

Defining Hellenism in the Red Chamber

The text of Bill S-220 formally recognizes that over 260,000 Canadians of Greek descent have made meaningful and lasting contributions to the nation's political, economic, scientific, and cultural landscapes. During the Second Reading of the bill, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Leo Housakos, delivered a stirring address that captured the emotional essence of the diaspora. Speaking as a child of immigrants raised in the vibrant Greek community of Montreal, Senator Housakos bridged the gap between ancient history and the modern immigrant experience. He paid tribute to the bill's sponsor, Senator Loffreda, noting the deep friendship he shares with the community. Senator Housakos recounted a recent conversation with leaders of the Italian community who jokingly questioned why Loffreda spent so much time with the Greeks. He told his colleagues that he explained to them that "In the world, there's two kinds of people, those who are Greek and those who want to be Greek," adding that "Senator Loffreda falls into that category".

The senator's speech moved beyond humour to articulate a definition of Hellenism that resonates with anyone who values liberty. He argued that "Hellenism is more than just a culture. It is a worldview, a commitment to human dignity, the pursuit of knowledge, and the belief that free individuals acting together can shape the destiny of their society". He reminded the chamber that "Democracy, of course, is a Greek word. Demokratia, which basically means power to the people," and described how citizens in the ancient Agora debated and held their leaders to account much like the

opposition does in Parliament today. This philosophical foundation was presented not as a relic of the past but as a living philosophy that continues to thrive in the democratic spirit of Canada. Senator Housakos noted that the "ideas shaped the Renaissance, inspired the Enlightenment, and influenced the very foundation of modern democratic societies, including our very own right here in Canada".

A History of Resilience and Sacrifice

The debate also served as a solemn remembrance of the sacrifices made to preserve this identity. Senator Housakos spoke of the "400 years under the Ottoman occupation" where language and faith were suppressed. He described how Greek priests and teachers risked their lives to teach children in "church basements and candlelight corners" preserving the dream of liberation that would eventually ignite the War of Independence in 1821. He drew parallels to the Second World War, specifically *Oxi Day* on October 28, 1940, when the Greek people responded to the ultimatum from fascist Italy with a single word of refusal. He quoted Winston Churchill's famous declaration that "Greeks don't fight like heroes, but heroes fight like Greeks". These historical touchstones provided the context for understanding the resilience of the first immigrants who arrived in Canada with little more than hope and determination.

Building Canada: From Pioneers to Modern Innovators

These early pioneers built the institutions that sustain the community today. In 1906, Montreal saw the opening of its first Greek Orthodox Church which became a spiritual anchor for a growing population. Senator Housakos highlighted that these immigrants "built restaurants, businesses, community centers, and schools named after philosophers who lived 2,500 years before them". He emphasized that they embraced Canada wholeheartedly while preserving the traditions of their homeland to make Canada richer in the process. The senator listed prominent Greek Canadians who have shaped the nation, including Mike Lazaridis, the founder of BlackBerry, Dr. Papageorgiou of the Jewish General Hospital, and baseball executive Alex Anthopoulos.

Expanding on the immense contribution to Canadian society, Senator Housakos detailed the success of the diaspora in various sectors, notably the food industry and public service. He recognized the Mamas brothers who operate major chains like "Milestone, Second Cup, Quesada," and "Nick Kyriakos, who's very well known

on Hockey Night in Canada". He also paid homage to the political trailblazers who paved the way for the current generation, mentioning "Phil Gigantes, who was appointed in the 1970s by Prime Minister Trudeau" and "Pana Merchant, who was appointed by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien". He also noted the historic presence of Ioannis Phokas, known as Juan de Fuca, who explored the waters of British Columbia in 1592. This comprehensive list served to illustrate that the Greek community has been integral to Canada's development from its earliest explorations to its modern digital economy.

Community Leadership Unites in Gratitude

The reaction from the community leadership has been one of immense gratitude and anticipation. The Greek Community of Greater Montreal (HCGM) issued a statement expressing profound emotion as the bill progresses. Basil Angelopoulos, President of the HCGM, praised the advocacy of the opposition leader. He stated that "Senator Housakos, with his long-standing dedication to issues concerning the diaspora, consistently highlights the contribution of Greeks to Canadian society and defends the values and ideals of Hellenism". The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Canada also voiced its strong support and urged the expedited passage of the legislation. The Archdiocese noted that the community is blessed to have parliamentarians who "advocate for the values and ideals crystallized for humanity on the streets of ancient Athens: respect for democracy; the rule of law; human rights; and, individual freedoms". They highlighted the successful establishment of Hellenic Heritage Month in Ontario in 2019, a legislative victory secured through the "tireless efforts of MPP Effie Triantafilopoulos".

As the vision originally championed by MP Annie Koutrakis nears reality in the Senate, the designation of March as Hellenic Heritage Month will provide a formal platform for all Canadians to discover the richness of this heritage. Senator Housakos articulated this sentiment perfectly when he observed that in Canada "there's no dichotomy" between ethnicities and national allegiance, noting that "We are all Canadians. We just happen to come from different backgrounds but with very similar experiences". He concluded his remarks by urging his colleagues to "expedite its passage without further delay" as the community has "waited long enough for this acknowledgement".

Bill S-220 has completed its second reading and is currently under consideration in committee.

Montreal Honors the Fallen of the Kalavryta Massacre



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The morning light filtered through the tall, arched windows of the Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary in Park Extension, casting long shadows across the polished floors while the scent of incense and old-world history filled the sanctuary. This solemn gathering on Sunday, December 14, 2025, served as a bridge between a tragic past in the mountains of Greece and a vibrant future for the Hellenic community in Montreal. As the congregation stood in hushed silence, the weight of the Kalavryta Massacre was felt through a collective commitment to heritage, the duty of remembrance for the innocent, and the preservation of a regional identity that defines the local experience for Canadians of Greek descent. The Kalavryta Association of Montreal, officially known as the Agia Lavra Brotherhood, organized this sacred event to honour the memory of the 1,313 souls who were lost on December 13, 1943. For the Canadians of Greek descent in attendance, the service was a profound introduction to a chapter of their ancestry that is defined by both immense suffering and incredible resilience. The church was decorated with the symbols of this legacy, including the blue and white flags of Greece flanking the intricate



wooden iconostasis and the fleur-de-lis representing our home in Quebec. This juxtaposition of symbols reflected the dual identity of the diaspora, showing how the traditions of the Peloponnese have found a permanent home in Montreal.

During the service, the Reverend Father Charalambos stood before the holy altar to address the parishioners on the spiritual necessity of this memorial. He spoke of the responsibility and the debt that the living owe to those who were silenced during the Nazi occupation of Greece. Father Charalambos stated, "We have the responsibility, the debt, to pray and to

remember these victims with a memorial service". He further emphasized the importance of historical awareness for future generations, noting, "we must remember the ugly parts of history so that they do not happen again". His words connected the historical atrocity to modern concerns, observing that hate continues in the world today and that the pursuit of peace is a continuous obligation. He expressed his hope that Christ, as the man of peace, would bring this necessary peace to the whole world. The atmosphere remained deeply reflective as the priest reminded those present that even though they were not there in 1943, they must still contemplate the pain of that black day.

and boys over the age of twelve were led to a depression in the land known as Laka tou Kapi. This site was located only a few hundred meters from the village and was surrounded by machine gun nests on the heights, leaving no possibility of escape. While the men were being executed, the women and children were locked inside the local elementary school, which the soldiers then set on fire. The survival of the women was only possible because a German soldier at the main door took pity on them and opened it, allowing them to escape the flames before he was executed by his own side for his act of mercy.

Perhaps the most moving part of the president's account was his description of the aftermath during the harsh Greek winter. He explained that the women returned to the execution site to find their husbands, fathers, and sons lying in the snow. Because the village had been burned and their tools were destroyed, these women were forced to dig the earth with their hands and feet to place their loved ones in the ground, as wolves and foxes in the area would otherwise prey on the bodies. This image of ancestral mothers digging through the frost to preserve the dignity of their loved ones resonated deeply with the Canadians of Greek descent in the pews, serving as a stark reminder of the strength inherent in their bloodline. President Lambros asked, "What were they and what did they believe? What were they looking at in front of them as they shot?"

The mission of the Kalavryta Brotherhood of Montreal extends beyond this annual memorial, as it seeks to strengthen Hellenic identity by ensuring that these regional histories are not forgotten by the younger generations in the diaspora. The association views these events as essential for maintaining a sense of pride and understanding of what it means to be Greek in a modern society. The president emphasized, "As long as Hellenism exists in the world and in our homeland, we will continue to honour December 13, 1943". He expressed his wish that humanity never sees such crimes again, even though wars never stop.

As the Sunday service drew to a close, President Lambros approached the memorial table, which was draped with the Greek flag and held a wreath adorned with a white and blue ribbon. He laid the wreath in a simple, quiet gesture of respect that carried the weight of eight decades of history. Following this act of devotion, the congregation joined in a memorial chant for the souls of the departed. The president Sotirios Athanasios Lambros then concluded the event with a detailed presentation of the events of the massacre.

The historical significance of the massacre was further illustrated through the personal stories that have survived the passage of time. Senator Leo Housakos previously brought these narratives to the Canadian Senate, highlighting survivors like Georgia Vagia. Georgia was only two days old when the massacre occurred, a child of the tragedy whose father was among the murdered men. Her mother, Efthymia Vagia, who became known as the last widow of Kalavryta, survived the fire and eventually saw her daughter move to Canada to build a new life as a citizen. Senator Housakos noted, "The echoes of history should always guide us toward a world where we stand tall for our values of freedom and democracy". He emphasized the importance of the survivors' courage in rebuilding their lives, noting that their perseverance teaches us the value of hope in the face of adversity.

Sotirios Athanasios Lambros, the president of the association, stood prominently in the church as he prepared to honour his compatriots. He provided a detailed context for the events of 1943, explaining that the 1,313 victims were civilians who had faulted in nothing at all. He described how the Nazi forces had occupied Kalavryta a week prior, deceiving the population with false assurances of safety while the commander, who spoke Greek, calmed the residents. This deception led to the morning of December 13, when the bells of Kalavryta rang out with a mournful and rapid rhythm, signaling the start of the roundup. The president noted that those executed included local residents and professionals such as professors, bankers, and police officers from across Greece who were working in the region at the time. He recalled the false promises made by the occupiers, who told the mayor and the locals that "they had no mood to harm the population".

The president detailed the horrifying separation of families, where men



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Montreal Greek Film Festival propels local filmmakers to the main stage

Eleventh edition of the festival marks a historic turning point by dedicating its grand finale to the rising stars of the Montreal Greek community



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For the Greek community of Greater Montreal, the anticipation begins long before the first reel is threaded or the digital projector hums to life. It is a palpable energy that ripples through the cafes of Parc-Extension, the living rooms of Laval, and the church halls of the South Shore. It is the promise of a collective return to roots, a seasonal rhythm that signals the arrival of the Montreal Greek Film Festival (MGFF). The festival has established itself as a vital communal ritual, a time when the diaspora gathers to remember, to debate, and to celebrate its collective identity. The eleventh edition of the festival confirmed its status as a unifying institution, bridging the distance between the Aegean and the Saint Lawrence River through the universal language of cinema.

A Festival for Every Hellene

The significance of this cultural gathering was underscored by the distinguished support it received from the highest levels of government and society, with the event booklet featuring messages from dignitaries including the Prime Minister of Canada and Mark Carney. The true measure of the festival's success was its physical reach within the community. In an ambitious move to ensure accessibility, the 2025 edition expanded to five distinct locations across the Greater Montreal Area, specifically Montreal, Laval, the West Island, the South Shore, and LaSalle.

In a radio interview in Greek on Radio Centre-Ville Montreal 102.3 FM, the festival's organizer, John Caoussias, emphasized that this geographical expansion was a matter of principle, ensuring that the cultural heartbeat of the festival could be felt by every Hellene in the metropolis. "If we can gather all the 60,000 to 70,000 Greeks to see a Greek film, that would be my greatest joy," Caoussias stated, highlighting his vision of the cinema as a modern-day agora where the community reconnects. "I want them to come and bring someone else next year to sit in a cinema seat and see a Greek movie on the big screen."

Cultivating the Next Generation

The MGFF deepened its commitment to cultural preservation through targeted educational programming. Recognizing that the future of Hellenism lies with the youth, the festival organized special screenings specifically for elementary school students from the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal (HCGM) and the Archangels schools. These events serve a dual purpose by exposing children to the sounds and stories of their heritage in a format they love, and instilling the habit of cultural participation from a young age. By engaging students, the festival ensures that the Greek language and



storytelling traditions remain living, breathing elements of their identity.

The Pivot to Local Creation

The festival leadership recognized that the maturity of the Greek-Canadian community includes its capacity for production. This sentiment was the driving force behind the decision to dedicate the prestigious closing night exclusively to local talent. This initiative emerged from a serendipitous encounter that underscores the untapped potential within the community. As Caoussias explained, the idea crystallized when Andreanna Theodoropoulos, a cinema student, approached him to volunteer for the festival. "She told me she is studying in Cinema Arts and making short movies herself," Caoussias recalled. Recognizing the opportunity to elevate a member of the community, he encouraged her to submit her work rather than volunteer. This interaction symbolized the festival's mission to transform community members into creators.

A Night at Vanier

The culmination of this vision took place at the Vanier College Auditorium, a venue chosen specifically to resonate with the younger demographic. The atmosphere was electric and distinct. The audience attended to watch movies made by their neighbors, their friends, and their children. The pride in the room was tangible as the diaspora found its own cinematic voice. The featured films were projected back-to-back, creating a montage of Greek-Canadian perspectives. Following the screenings, the screen rose, and the filmmakers took to the stage for a Q&A session, flanked by Caoussias. It was a visual tableau of the community's artistic future.

Voices of the Neighborhood

The diversity of the films showcased the breadth of local talent. Andreanna Theodoropoulos's film, *Empty Soul*, offered a glimpse into the sophisticated storytelling emerging from Montreal's universities. Speaking to the audience, Theodoropoulos shared her journey from aspiring actress to director. "I actually really prefer being behind the camera," she admitted to

the crowd. "I studied it in CEGEP and it just deepened my passion for it... I would love to make a longer feature film for sure at some point. I think for right now, short films are a really good avenue to explore different genres."

Filmmaker George "Zane" Zanatakos presented *After*, a film born of raw instinct. He described a production process driven by spontaneity and the immediate environment. "We filmed it in three days in the mountains," Zane explained, highlighting the guerrilla filmmaking spirit that characterizes passionate indie projects.

The audience also connected deeply with *Big City*, a film by brothers Apollo and Chris, who work professionally as stuntmen. Their project humorously tackled the friendly rivalry between the Greeks of Laval and those of Montreal, proving that the diaspora's unique internal dynamics are worthy subjects for the silver screen. The lineup was rounded out by *Ghosted MD* and the feature *Scarpa di Cementi* by John Vamvas, demonstrating that local creators are operating across all genres.

Breaking into the American Market

The program also highlighted the work of Nafsika Antypas, whose production Ghosted MD brought a distinct level of professional polish to the evening. Antypas exemplifies the local creators who are successfully achieving commercial viability alongside their artistic goals. Her screening at Vanier College functioned as a showcase of a sophisticated pilot that has already garnered significant international interest.

During the question and answer period, Antypas shared the impressive trajectory of her work with the audience and revealed that her storytelling has resonated well beyond the borders of Quebec. She explained that the concept and execution of Ghosted MD had successfully attracted the attention of "American giants" in the television industry who expressed genuine interest in the project. This revelation served as a powerful validation for the room and offered tangible proof that stories originating from the Montreal Greek community possess the quality and universal appeal required to compete in the highly demanding US entertainment market.

Building an Industry

The MGFF is providing a screen while simultaneously building the infrastructure of a local industry. On stage, Caoussias paid tribute to the technical backbone of the festival, Tony Manolikakis. "We have our main technical guru, Tony Manolikakis, who helps us with sound, video, editing, all kinds of stuff," Caoussias noted, emphasizing that the festival acts as a mentorship hub. "We actually have budding film professionals here in Montreal." This support system is bearing fruit. Caoussias estimated that there are now approximately fifteen film professionals of Greek descent active in the city.

Year Round Access

The organization announced a plan to secure the legacy of Greek cinema for the future. Caoussias revealed that the festival is working on launching a proprietary streaming service in 2026. "I'm working with Greece to help maybe develop an archive of all the films that have been produced in the last 50 or 60 years," he announced. The vision is a subscription-based platform where the community can access a vast library of Greek cinema year-round. "People can subscribe and go and pay your \$5.99 and watch any film from the 60s, the 80s, 2000... watch it on your flat screen TV."

A Community United

As the Q&A session wound down, the sense of camaraderie was undeniable. One of the filmmakers took the microphone to express a sentiment shared by all: "It's good sharing the stage, the cinema with you. God bless."

The formal proceedings concluded with a gesture of traditional Greek hospitality as the organizers encouraged the audience to linger. Caoussias took the microphone one last time to announce, "There's good food," ushering the attendees to a reception at the rear of the hall where the celebration of local cinema continued in a more intimate setting. The crowd filtered out of the auditorium, plates in hand, to discuss the films and congratulate the directors. The lights of the Vanier Auditorium eventually dimmed, bringing the eleventh edition of the Montreal Greek Film Festival to a close.



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HCGM Radiothon 2025 Raises Over \$210,000 for Greek Schools in Historic Fundraising Effort

Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal mobilizes unprecedented community support as donors answer the call to preserve Greek education for future generations



Inside a large conference room at the Chateau Royal Reception Halls on Saturday, November 29, 2025, the steady hum of activity filled the air as microphones were positioned around a long wooden table, cables snaked across the floor, and volunteers moved between stations with clipboards in hand. A projection screen displayed a live tally of donations, the numbers climbing steadily as the morning progressed. The room had been transformed into a remote broadcast studio, and from this unlikely command centre, the Greek voice of Montreal would reach thousands of homes across the city. Mr. Vassilis Zannis, owner of Chateau Royal Reception Halls, had graciously offered the facilities and service staff at no cost, ensuring that every dollar raised would go directly to the schools. The Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal (HCGM) had gathered its forces for Radiothon 2025, a day-long fundraising marathon broadcast live across three radio stations to support the Greek schools that have educated generations of Hellenic youth in this city. By day's end, the community would raise over \$210,000, the largest amount ever collected from a single radio fundraising effort by the HCGM's Fundraising Committee.

The broadcast began at ten o'clock in the morning on CFMB 1280 AM, where host Michalis Tellidis opened the airwaves to donors, community leaders, and students. At two o'clock, Radio Centre-Ville Cinq 102.3 FM took over under the direction of Dimitris Papadopoulos, and the day concluded on CJLV 1570 AM with Kostas Daniilidis and Vasiliki Lantzanaki on their program "Radio Akrites." Throughout the eight hours, George Guzman served as the overall coordinator and radio host, ensuring seamless transitions between stations and keeping the momentum alive as donations poured in from across the Greater Montreal area.

George Tsitouras, a partner at Ernst and Young and the Honorary President of this year's Radiothon, addressed listeners with evident pride in the community's response. "Today we celebrate our schools. Today we celebrate our community. Today we celebrate the strength we have shown these days for our children," he declared.

"Our schools are diamonds, and these diamonds must shine in our community," Tsitouras, whose family has maintained a connection to the Socrates schools for 32 years and whose eight children all attended the institution, spoke of witnessing firsthand the dedication required to organize such an event. "I want to thank the Fundraising Committee for the many years of work and the millions they have collected for our beloved schools and for our children," he said.

The Fundraising Committee, led by President Tasso Xipolitakis, works throughout the year to secure financial support for the schools, and this year's results exceeded all expectations. Among the major donors, Chrysos Karapatsas and Nikos Karapiniaris each contributed \$10,000, while the Association of Epidavrou-Limiras-Laconias presented a remarkable donation of \$25,000. The Power of 100 group provided \$60,000 to create a special "double your impact" matching fund, allowing many donations to be doubled until the pool was exhausted.

Me. Basile Angelopoulos, President of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, spoke of a new era for the organization. "We are at the stage where, when we acquired these buildings, we put our children in and it was something we had bought or built. Now, the same children who graduated from these buildings come and urge us to take care of them and make them even better," he observed. Angelopoulos noted that his administration had "managed to convince some people to organize a capital of \$60,000 to encourage even more people to contribute to today's effort by doubling each contribution." He announced that the total had reached \$125,000 by midday, with donations continuing to arrive.

Among the most moving moments of the broadcast came when Grade 6 students from Socrates School shared their reflections on what their education had meant to them. Zoe Shelton, a graduating student, addressed parents directly: "For all parents who do not know if it is the right school for their children, I tell you now it is the best decision you can make." Another student, Fotini Christea, spoke of learning three languages and expressed pride in her heritage: "We are proud that we are Greek. I believe all Greek children would be very fortunate if they graduated from Socrates School." These testimonials, delivered in fluent Greek, demonstrated the very mission the schools strive to fulfil.

Panagiota Tsitouras, wife of the Honorary President and President

of the Philoptochos of St. George Cathedral, shared a personal story that illustrated the schools' impact on young lives. She recalled how her daughter Konstantina, at just five years old in kindergarten, had taught the family to say grace before meals. "Before eating, she started: 'Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us' three times," she recounted. "And then, 'Come Christ and Virgin Mary and sit with us. Bless our table with all our food.' I was so moved that a five-year-old taught us to say the prayer before eating."

Nikolaos Karalekas, the Consul General of Greece in Montreal, attending his first Radiothon during his tenure, spoke of what he found upon arriving in the city. "Coming here I met a community where our culture is alive, our customs and traditions are honored and known to all Greek-origin residents of the Montreal, Quebec area and beyond," he said. "This is thanks to the schools." The General Consul noted that the community would mark 120 years of existence next year, with the schools serving as the primary vehicle for transmitting Greek language and culture across generations.

Former Member of Parliament Eleni Bakopanos, who served the Ahuntsic riding, emphasized the quality of education her own children received. "I am very proud because all three of my children had the opportunity and I sent them to Socrates schools," she said, challenging other elected officials of Greek descent to contribute. "Education is excellent, and as we know, whatever profession you choose in life, a good education is the beginning of whatever you can achieve in life."

The needs addressed by the fundraising are substantial and immediate. George Tsitouras revealed that his grandson, also named George and a second-grade student, had asked his mother whether some of the money raised could be used to repair the toilets at Socrates III because "they are not as they should be." This innocent observation from a child crystallized the practical realities facing the schools. "The schools' needs are great," noted Tasso Xipolitakis. "From 2018 to 2023 we have given \$1,387,000 to the schools." The funds will support urgent maintenance and repairs across the five school units, ensuring students learn in safe and modern environments.

Inspired by the Radiothon's success, George Tsitouras announced a new initiative during a follow-up interview on Mike-FM 105.1 with host Marie Daperis-Griffiths. The "Christmas Challenge" aims to raise the total amount

collected for the schools to \$500,000 by Christmas, representing \$100,000 for each of the five school units. To launch the campaign, Tsitouras and his wife doubled their donation from \$10,000 to \$20,000, and President Angelopoulos and his wife Katerina committed to doing the same. "I know that if we unite our forces from now until Christmas, we can increase the total amount raised for our schools to \$500,000," Tsitouras declared.

Olga Papadatou, President of the Socrates Educational Foundation, which provides financial assistance to families unable to afford tuition, reminded listeners that the Socrates-Demosthenes School is the largest private elementary school in the entire province of Quebec. "In the last 20 years, we have provided over \$600,000 in tuition alone for children to be able to attend and learn in these schools," she said, noting that \$68,000 had already been approved for the current school year.

The Radiothon drew support from churches, which held special collections, and from Philoptochos organizations across the city. Greek newspapers including BHMA, TA NEA, and GREEK TIMES provided media coverage, as did television programs "Edo Montreal," "Olou tou Kosmou oi Kyriakes," "O Kanadas Simera," and "Mazi ston Kanada" on Odyssey TV, along with "Kalimera Patrida" on ICI Television.

George Tsandrizos, Executive Director of the Hellenic Community and a graduate of Socrates School himself, captured the significance of the day. "These schools are a living organ," he said. "They are a critical piece of the mechanism which gives all meaning to the term community. Without these schools, there is no community." He recalled that he remains close friends with people he met on his first day of kindergarten at Socrates II, and that tonight he would visit one such friend, a testament to the lifelong bonds formed within these walls.

Those wishing to contribute to the Christmas Challenge and support the schools may donate by telephone at 514-738-2421, extension 114, or online through the Community's website at hcgm.org. The Radiothon continues to accept donations through the end of December. The broadcast concluded in the early evening on CJLV 1570 AM, with the final tally surpassing \$210,000 and donations continuing to arrive throughout the following week.

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Congress Reaffirms Role as Unifying Voice for Quebec Greeks

(by Dimitri Papadopoulos) The Centre des Congrès Palace in Laval was bathed in soft light against a backdrop of elegant white drapery, creating a solemn and intimate atmosphere for a gathering that bridged the gap between Montreal’s Hellenic pioneers and its rising political stars. Rows of attentive community members sat facing a dais of distinguished leaders, marking a moment of reflection and mobilization for the Greek diaspora. This visual tableau set the stage for the Hellenic Congress of Quebec’s annual conference, a forum dedicated to examining the vital intersection of Hellenic identity and political influence in Canada under the theme of participation and representation.

The event began with a touch of characteristic cultural humour as John Theodosopoulos, the Vice-President of the Congress, welcomed the attendees by acknowledging the delayed start with a knowing smile. “We’re Greeks, that’s why we announced two and we’re starting with two and a half,” he quipped, instantly establishing a rapport with the room before pivoting to the serious business at hand. This blend of cultural familiarity and formal purpose permeated the opening remarks of President Sotirios Antypas, who addressed the audience in Greek to emphasize the continuity of their heritage. He grounded the day’s discussions in a deep respect for the values passed down through generations, stating, “I think that the commitment that we have in the democratic values which they come from our ancestors that we inherited those values had guided us in order to continue contributing in the political, in the economical, in the cultural life of Quebec and Canada”.

Senator Leo Housakos delivered a keynote address that resonated with ancestral pride and a stark call to action, reminding the audience of the immense sacrifices made by the first generation of immigrants who arrived “with five bucks in their pocket” yet built enduring institutions like the Greek Community of Montreal. He urged the attendees to honour those foundations by actively engaging in the present, warning against the complacency that can accompany success. “Tough times build strong men and comfortable times build weak men,” he cautioned, sharing that he constantly reminds his own children of the “lion in the heart” that drove their grandparents to succeed. His words underscored the central theme that history “can only sustain itself and perse-



vere if you’re ready to defend and fight for it”.

Adding to this call for renewal was Basile Angelopoulos, President of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, who spoke of a transformative energy within the organization. “A new wind has started to blow,” he declared, emphasizing that this momentum must extend to all organizations within the diaspora. He highlighted the critical need for mentorship to engage the youth, noting that the community’s challenges are not merely financial but rooted in participation. “We should all think, and it is good for all of us to think together about how we can create the appropriate conditions to promote the young people,” he urged, framing political engagement as a fundamental act of giving back to the society that allowed them to prosper.

The first panel discussion, moderated by journalist and author Justine Frangouli, brought personal narratives to the forefront and illustrated the diverse pathways to political success. Frangouli opened the session by challenging the traditional gender dynamics of the room, asserting that “the Congress is not a male issue, the Congress is mainly a female issue,” and celebrating the female leaders present.

Member of Parliament Annie Koutrakis highlighted the importance of being informed and analytical, drawing on the Greek concept of “tecton” or builder to describe the “tectonic shifts” currently reshaping global politics. She spoke passionately about her practical achievements, specifically the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on tourism between Canada and Greece, a milestone that had been missing despite decades of trade relations. “It’s really one of the most proud moments of my political career,” she shared, illustrating how political office can directly strengthen ties with the homeland.

Her colleague, MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos, shared the intimate details of her own political origin story, which began not in a boardroom but in “my grandmother’s living room” where she launched her nomination bid. She re-

counted the initial scepticism of her father, who worried about her leaving a stable teaching career for the volatility of politics, and the sheer grit required to win. “I was still going to my day job as a teacher from 8 to 4... and going to the doors until 9 p.m., in the dead of winter, in the freezing cold,” she recalled. Her perseverance paid off, allowing her to later champion vital initiatives such as a national school food program and improved access to fertility treatments, issues she noted would not be prioritized without the voices of young women in Parliament.

Local governance was represented by veteran politicians who emphasized service to the citizenry. Mary Deros, a former city councillor with decades of experience, described her entry into politics as a natural extension of her volunteer work as a “soccer mom,” managing teams and serving on the board of the Park Extension Youth Organization. She vividly described her 1998 campaign, where her “volunteers were the kids from soccer,” who stayed up with her “till four in the morning in drizzle rain, putting up my posters” because their parents trusted her implicitly. Aglaia Revelakis, a city councillor for Chomedey, spoke to the resilience required to break away from party machinery. She shared the pivotal moment of her decision to run as an independent, spurred by her husband’s advice that “it’s now or never,” a move that allowed her to continue serving her constituents with integrity.

The conference also tackled serious legislative matters affecting the community. Attorney and former MNA Gerasimos (Gerry) Sklavounos Jr. provided a detailed analysis of Bill 1, the proposed Quebec Constitution Act 2025. He outlined the potential implications for minority institutions, warning that the bill’s provisions could prevent school boards and other bodies from using public funds to legally challenge government actions. He criticized the legislation for seemingly being designed “to protect the government from contestation by citizens” rather than the other way around, urging the com-

munity to remain vigilant and informed about legal changes that could reshape the province’s institutional framework.

The afternoon sessions pivoted to the future of the Hellenic Congress of Quebec itself. Moderator Nicholas Katalifos shared a personal anecdote about how he first connected with the Congress as a university student seeking help with a thesis, eventually finding mentorship under Professor Andreas Gerolimatos. He noted the immense potential of the community’s professional network, pointing out that “more than 350 people of Greek origin” currently work just within the English Montreal School Board.

Panelist Dimitri Soudas offered blunt, pragmatic advice on the necessity of unity, recounting his time in the Prime Minister’s office where divided community organizations diluted their own influence. “Unless we present one united front we will never get ministers of Greek origin,” he argued, stressing that internal cohesion is the prerequisite for external power. He also injected levity into the discussion with a story from his youth in the Congress, recalling a parade float project where a budget of \$500 ballooned to \$2,500, a humorous reminder of the learning curve inherent in youth activism.

During this panel, Gerasimos Antypas offered a historical perspective on the Congress’s evolution, addressing the audience in Greek to reflect on the revitalization of the organization in the late 1990s. He noted that the goal of his cohort was “to pass this flame to others of our generation” and highlighted the deep roots of the community by referencing a “Greek-Canadian guide... published in Montreal in 1921,” proving that their history in the province is foundational. He urged the audience to view the day’s proceedings not as a culmination but as a launchpad for future engagement, asserting, “I think that what is happening now in the Congress is the beginning but today’s discussion must be the beginning of these challenges”.

Following the closing remarks on the road ahead by President Sotirios Antypas, the conference officially concluded its sessions at 5:30 PM. While the schedule originally called for the organization’s General Assembly to follow immediately, the leadership elected to postpone this meeting until January 2026. This decision was made to ensure maximum participation during a quieter week after the holidays, acknowledging the high volume of competing community events taking place throughout the city on December 7 2025.

Greece’s Great Return: Transforming Brain Drain into a National Brain Hub



Justine FRANGOULI
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The narrative of modern Greece is being rewritten by a calculated transformation of its human capital landscape rather than the austerity of the past. For nearly a decade, the nation was defined by a painful exodus known as the brain drain, a period between 2010 and 2018 when approximately 600,000 highly skilled professionals felt forced to abandon their homeland in search of stability abroad. That era of departure, driven by a shrinking economy and soaring unemployment, has now given way to a strategic reversal. The Greek government is welcoming back its diaspora while actively constructing a competitive economic environment designed to transform the country from a talent exporter into a regional brain hub by 2030. This shift is spearheaded by the Rebrain Greece initiative, a comprehensive national strategy that bridges the gap between the specialized workforce living abroad and the dynamic needs of a domestic market now growing faster than the European average.

In an exclusive interview with The Montreal Greek Times, Minister of Labour and Social Security Niki Kerameus detailed the mechanics of this national pivot. She described the core

mission of the initiative clearly, stating that “Rebrain Greece was created to serve as the ‘bridge’ that brings together our compatriots who, during the years of the crisis, left Greece seeking employment abroad, with dozens of major Greek companies that are in search of specialized personnel”. These gatherings serve to inform the diaspora about the changes in the country over the past six years and facilitate direct meetings between candidates and corporate leaders to explore career paths in the homeland.

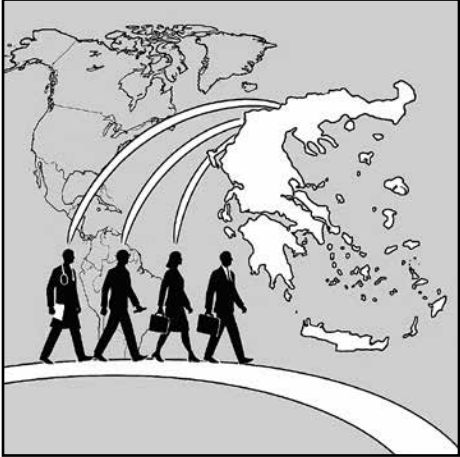
Strategic policy has now been layered atop this emotional connection to address the financial realities of relocation. Minister Kerameus acknowledged that “in today’s competitive global labour environment, emotional reasons... obviously play a role, but usually are not enough for someone to decide to return”. To address this, the administration established a significant fiscal instrument in the form of a fifty percent reduction in income tax for seven years for those returning after working abroad for five or more years. This policy sits alongside the automatic recognition of medical specialties and qualifications obtained in Canada and the USA, a legislative change designed to streamline the reintegration of healthcare professionals. As the Minister noted, “Our country now represents a competitive proposition and a ‘nursery’ of professional opportunities”.

The sustainability of these positions rests on the financial strength of the hiring entities. The recent event on December 7 in New York

featured representatives from 35 of the largest Greek companies active in cutting edge sectors including technology, shipping, energy, finance, and healthcare. Minister Kerameus emphasized the transformation of the economic landscape, stating that “Today’s Greece bears no resemblance to the Greece our compatriots left behind during the crisis years”. These organizations are seeking specialized executives and offering positions with high salaries to match their leading status in the market.

Eurostat data confirms the demographic shift. Between 2010 and 2023, while 659,547 Greek citizens left the country, 422,688 have returned. This represents a reversal of 64 percent of the brain drain caused by the crisis. “Our country is already in ‘brain regain,’” Minister Kerameus declared. She pointed out that Greece has recorded its first year where more people returned to the homeland than left. This statistical milestone serves as the foundation for the government’s 2030 vision. “Our goal is that in the coming years Greece increasingly transforms into a ‘brain hub,’” she added.

Minister Kerameus extended a direct invitation to Hellenism in Canada. “I want to tell our compatriots that our homeland is a different country from the one they were forced to leave behind,” she stated. It is now a nation with significant professional opportunities actively participating in global developments. With the help of the diaspora, the country can rise even higher. “It is in their hands to become part of this great effort underway, to contribute to a



better tomorrow for our homeland, but also for themselves and their families,” Kerameus concluded.

For expatriates seeking to navigate this return, the government has outlined a streamlined digital pathway. Candidates must first register on the official platform at **platform.rebraingreece.gr** where they can create a profile as a highly specialized executive and upload their CV to match with positions categorized by the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations system. Following recruitment, typically facilitated through events like the recent one in New York, the professional must formally apply to the tax authority to activate the fiscal privileges detailed by the Minister.

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Effie Giannou

Conseillère de la ville
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effie.giannou@montreal.ca



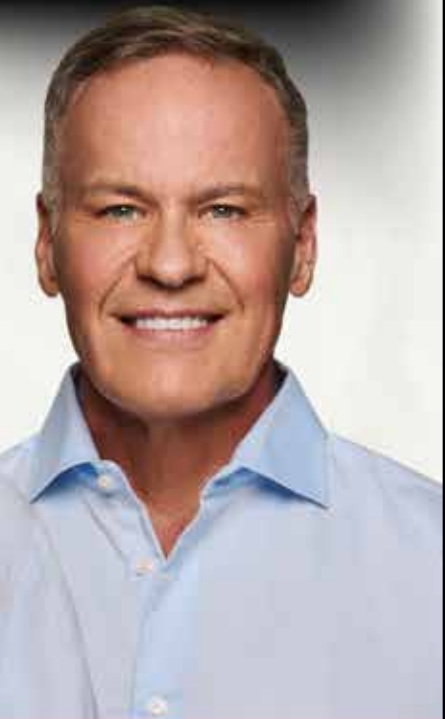
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