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Over a century of Greek history honoured at former Holy Trinity site



photo: Harry Barba/HCGM



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At the entrance of the Hotel10 restaurant, framed black-and-white photographs of early Greek families lined the walls, drawing guests into a shared moment of recognition and quiet reflection. Faces from another era looked out from carefully preserved images, many of them taken on the same grounds where the Greek Community of Montreal first organized itself more than a century ago. Two men in dark suits stood shoulder to shoulder, pointing at a grid of group portraits and searching for familiar names. Around them, other guests did the same, leaning in close, murmuring dates, some tracing fingers across the glass. Conversations slowed as attendees paused and lingered, while the setting itself carried the weight of memory. From this intimate threshold, the evening unfolded into a broader meditation on migration, faith, language and the enduring institutions that shaped Hellenic life in Montreal.

The sold-out event, titled Our Roots, Our Journey, took place on Feb. 8 at Hotel10, at 10 Sherbrooke St. W., built on the historic site of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, a cornerstone of the community until it was destroyed by fire more than 40 years ago. The location was not incidental. Holy Trinity had once stood as the spiritual and social centre of Greek Montreal, a place where worship, education and communal decision-making converged under one roof. On Jan. 16, 1986, the church was consumed by flames in what the Journal de Montréal described at the time as the loss of "one of the most beautiful churches in the city." Before its destruction, Holy Trinity had housed Sunday liturgies, Greek-language classrooms, youth clubs, community meetings and the very institutions that would grow into the HCGM as it exists today. The building was eventually converted into a commercial structure and later, alongside the adjacent Art Nouveau Godin building dating from 1915, became the hotel that now occupies the address. The community still owns the land. Hosting the event there restored the continuity between past and present, grounding the anniversary celebrations in physical history.

Like many started sharing throughout the evening, this historic ground holds deep personal meaning. For me, it embodies the culture and unified identity I proudly carry as a Greek-Canadian. It was the church where my parents were married in 1977, where my siblings were baptized, and the very street where my family has lived since the 1950s—where I grew up into adulthood. This neighbourhood is where my father arrived by boat at just five years old in 1959, and where my mother came at eighteen to visit her aunt, only to meet my father and choose to build her life here. What began as the dream of our parents and grandparents became our reality. It represents the opportunities we hold today and our responsibility to honour that legacy—preserving our heritage, language, and culture while leading future generations forward. It is this sense of gratitude and duty that motivates me to give back and proudly serve my community as Youth Secretary of the HCGM Board and other organizations that strengthen and inspire the next generation of our community across Quebec and Canada.

Guests were welcomed into a room filled with archival material drawn from the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal's library, alongside contributions from Jim Tselios, Jim Lekas and other private fami-lies. Photographs displayed at the entrance and on easels throughout the venue documented weddings, school classes, community councils and youth groups that once gathered at Holy Trinity. Numbered cards and pens were placed on each table so that attendees could help identify the figures in the pictures. Several guests recognized parents and grandparents in the images, often sharing stories across tables. The atmosphere was formal yet deeply personal, combining the dignity of commemoration with the warmth of reunion.

The evening was the first official event marking the HCGM's 120th anniversary. It was organized by Kostia Pantazis, chair of the Personalities Subcommittee of the 120th anniversary committee, and em-ceed by Christina Georgiou-Laliberte, a graduate of École Socrates-Démosthènes and a current student at the Aristotle secondary program. In her opening remarks, Georgiou-Laliberte framed the theme of the night as both historical and forward-looking. "Our roots keep us stable while our journey shows our growth and our dreams," she said. "Today, as we reflect on our roots and our journey, I am especially excited to learn more about the history of our community as we recognize and honour the builders of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal." She delivered her remarks in fluent Greek, French and English, a trilingual performance that would resonate throughout the afternoon as a living testament to everything the founding families had set in motion.

Central to the programme was a video presentation produced by Peri Creticos. The short film drew on interviews with descendants of the founding families, including Christos Goulakos, Jim Tselios, Aristia Skodras, Ernie Grevakis and Jim Lekas, who shared accounts of their forebears' arrival in Canada, their early struggles and the businesses they built from nothing. Lekas, a former vice-president of the National Bank of Greece (Canada) in Montreal and past president of the Hellenic Board of Trade, told THE MONTREAL GREEK TIMES his great-great-uncle Theodore Lekas was documented as the first recorded Greek in Montreal in the 1840s, and possibly the first in all of Canada. "Imagine getting off a ship, landing in a strange place, not knowing any language, and having $10 in your pocket," he said. "That is how my father-in-law came over here, and he built an empire. He built the best Greek restaurant in Montreal, which everybody knew of." Jim Tselios recounted how his grandfather George Tselios, a Macedonomachos who had fought against the Bulgarians, fled the Ottoman authorities, sailed to Montreal in 1907 and found work stoking furnaces at the CPR Angus Shops. Within two

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Jean Coutu
Φαρμακοποιός - ιδιοκτήτρια : Κατερίνα Καραΐνδρου
Νοσοκόμα για μέτρηση πίεσης, σακχάρου και χοληστερίνης κάθε Τρίτη 9πμ-3μμ
Ανοικτά 7 ημέρες την εβδομάδα: Καθημερινές 9πμ-10μμ και Σαββατοκύριακα 9πμ-9μμ
- Εμβόλια
- Κάθε είδους συνταγές
- Καλλυντικά
- Φωτογραφίες διαβατηρίου
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Cephalonians celebrate heritage and unity at annual carnival dance in Laval





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Soft violet lighting washed over the reception hall in Laval as children in traditional Ionian dress joined hands at the centre of the parquet floor, their small black shoes moving in careful rhythm while parents and grandparents watched with visible pride from candlelit tables. The murmur of Greek voices mingled with laughter, the clink of glasses and the anticipation of carnival season. Within this festive setting, the Cephalonian Association of Montreal held its annual dance, an evening devoted to heritage, youth and continuity, marked this year by the presence of the Deputy Regional Governor for Entrepreneurship and Diaspora Affairs of the Region of the Ionian Islands, Eleni Papanastassatou, representing Regional Governor Giannis Trepeklis during her official visit to Canada.

The Carnival Dance of the Cephalonian Brotherhood of Canada Ainos has become a fixed point on the community calendar, now in its forty second year. Held at the Palace Reception Halls in Laval, the event gathered families from across the Greater Montreal area and beyond, reflecting a tradition that links Montreal to the Ionian Islands through music, language and shared memory. As the master of ceremonies welcomed guests, he noted the significance of hosting both the Consul General of Greece in Montreal, Nikolaos Karalekas, and Ms. Papanastassatou, whose visit included Toronto and Ottawa before culminating in Montreal.

President Apostolos Aggourias addressed the audience with visible emotion. “It is a great joy for all Cephalonians and all Ionian Islanders that we have with us tonight the Deputy Regional Governor,” he said, welcoming the delegation and emphasizing the unity of the Ionian diaspora. He recalled that the association’s annual carnival evening has consistently brought together generations, with the youth dance group at its heart.

Ms. Papanastassatou, speaking to the assembled guests, expressed gratitude for the invitation extended by the community. “It is a special honour and joy for me to be here representing the Region of the Ionian Islands,” she said. “I see that you are very united and very active, and this brings great satisfaction to me and to the Region.” She described her visit to the Greek school in Montreal earlier in the day, noting how moved she was by the dedication to language and roots. “You are making every effort to keep your ties with the homeland. I am truly proud of this,” she said. She conveyed the greetings of the Regional Governor and affirmed that the Region will continue to strengthen bonds with the diaspora.

Her presence in Montreal formed part of a broader mission to reinforce institutional cooperation and promote Ionian products in North America, as outlined in the official press release . During her stay, she met with the Consul General and held targeted discussions with business leaders active in Canada and New York who are among the largest importers of Greek products in the region. These meetings, conducted in what was described as a constructive and positive climate, focused on tourism, investment and trade opportunities for each Ionian island.

This visit carries tangible relevance. The Region’s outreach to the diaspora supports the very associations, schools and cultural initiatives that sustain Hellenic identity abroad. By engaging directly with local entrepreneurs and community leaders, Ms. Papanastassatou signalled that the Ionian Islands view their diaspora not as distant observers but as partners in cultural and economic development.

The evening’s emotional centre belonged to the children. Dressed in traditional Cephalonian costumes, they performed dances such as the Maneta, the Ballos and the Gyres. One young dancer, Alexandros, shared his excitement in a brief interview before taking the floor. “We are very happy and very lucky,” he said, thanking his teacher. Elisavet, whose father hails from Lourdata in Cephalonia, spoke of the island as home despite being born in Canada. “Every time we go to Cephalonia, it feels like the place where we must be,” she said, describing the warmth of the people and the joy of returning each year.

Dance teacher Chrysovalantis Katharios, only nineteen years old, underscored the intergenerational chain that defines such associations. “We have around thirty children now, and more are joining,” he explained. Encouraging parents to enrol their children, he added, “This is important so that they can continue it with their own children in the future.” Having learned dance from his mother, also a teacher, he spoke of roots that extend beyond geography. Though not himself Cephalonian by origin, he has embraced the association as family. “We are very close and very united,” he said.

The Consul General highlighted the shared heritage of the Ionian Islands and the importance of institutional collaboration. He welcomed the activation of a diaspora portfolio within the Region and affirmed that the Consulate stands ready to cooperate on joint initiatives. As the programme unfolded, the dancers journeyed musically from Corfu to Cephalonia and Zakynthos (from where my proud Ionian roots stem from my mother’s side), guided by narrators who reminded the audience that each island carries its own rhythm, stories and history. The hall filled with applause as the youth concluded with Cephalonian dances, followed by the promise of Venetian and Ionian carnival traditions later in the evening. The former president and current Hellenic Congress of Quebec leader, Sotirios Antypas, observed that many associations across the community are experiencing renewed vitality, strengthened by youth participation.

By the time the official speeches ended and the music and dancing resumed, the formal and the festive had blended seamlessly. Families returned to the dance floor, elders exchanged greetings in Greek, and the Ionian spirit resonated through song and movement. The forty second annual Carnival Dance of the Cephalonian Brotherhood of Canada Ainos concluded with traditional dances and music late into the evening at the Palace Reception Halls in Laval.

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From Evangelismos to Holy Trinity, a community takes shape

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

years, he had brought over his sons, aged 14 and 12, and put them to work.

George Tsitouras, the newly appointed president of the Fundraising Committee, described the gathering as a moment of gratitude and renewal. “We are very happy to be here for the first families that built our community,” he said. “We wish to honour them today and to find the energy to do our best for the community, to bring it back to where it was many years ago.” He thanked the broader community for its support during the recent Radio Marathon and announced efforts for the coming year’s fundraising initiatives to support the Socrates schools.

HCGM president Basile Angelopoulos delivered the evening’s keynote, situating the celebration within a historical arc that began with Greek settlers arriving in the 1840s, long before any organized community existed. Those first arrivals landed in a harsh climate with no infrastructure to welcome them. They borrowed priests when they could find them and held makeshift liturgies wherever space allowed. It was only in 1906, when the Greek government and the Ecumenical Patriarchate agreed to send clergy to the New World, that the community formally incorporated and established its first church, Evangelismos, on a nearby street. By 1925, political divisions imported from Greece, between monarchists and supporters of Eleftherios Venizelos, had split the parish in two. The Venizelists purchased a Methodist church on Sherbrooke Street for $50,000, the equivalent of more than one million dollars today, and renamed it Holy Trinity. The Great Depression forced reconciliation: the community sold Evangelismos and unified under one roof.

Angelopoulos then recounted a passage from the memoirs of Judge Dimitri Hadjis, the first Greek judge appointed in Quebec, who recalled walking through the church hall in the early 1980s and hearing, in memory, the voice of community leader Frixos Papachristidis rallying his compatriots to purchase the land for the future St. George Church and community centre in 1954. The price was $290,000, roughly $3.4 million in today’s currency. “Do not fear, my Greek friends,” Papachristidis told the room. “We will find the money. We will buy the lot. The church no longer fits us. New blood has come from Greece. We must accommodate the newcomers.” He then called on each family by name, Spiliotopoulos, Gavris, Grevakis, Kolivas, Florakas, Sklavounakis, and others, until the sum was pledged. “And if there is anything missing, take this blank cheque, Father Salamis, and fill in the missing amount from me,” Papachristidis said. The $3.4 million, in today’s terms, was collected on the spot.

“That was our history,” Angelopoulos told the crowd. “That was the way things were done then. That is the way our forefathers took care of things so that we can inherit them and celebrate them today.” He added: “Honouring the people who built our institutions is not only an act of gratitude, it is a commitment. We inherited something extraordinary. It is now our duty to preserve it, strengthen it and ensure its excellence for generations to come.”

One of the afternoon’s most affecting moments came when nine-year-old Tommy Macrisopoulos, a fourth-year student at Socrates school in Roxboro, took the microphone. Speaking clearly and confidently, he recounted how his grandfather Tom Macrisopoulos attended Greek school in the basement of Holy Trinity Church, on the same ground where they stood that day. He told the room that his great-grandfather Nikos Kalivrousis left the island of Andros at 14 to work on ships, jumped ship in Saint John, N.B., in 1934 because he was perpetually seasick, and made his way to Montreal. His other great-grandfather, Paul Pantazos, arrived from Nafpaktos in 1947 at the age of 17 and was introduced by his cousin Jimmy Asimakopoulos to the Holy Trinity Youth Club, where he met the woman who would become Tommy’s great-grandmother. “When I hear these stories, I feel proud and grateful,” the boy said. “These are my roots, and this is my family’s journey.” His remarks drew sustained applause and reflected the generational continuity the event sought to highlight.

Nikolaos Karalekas, Greece’s consul general in Montreal, who was attending such a community gather-ing for the first time, congratulated the HCGM. “We had the joy and the honour to witness a tribute to the first Greeks who arrived in Montreal, in Quebec, more than 120 years ago,” he said. “Hellenism is a value, it is our homeland, and we have a duty and a joy, above all, to continue it into the future.”

HCGM vice-president Michalis Patsatzis described the evening as deeply moving, pointing to the presence of second, third and fourth generations seated together. “Families came with very few things and many difficulties, because they did not speak the language and financially did not have the means, but because they were united, because they believed in the Greek language, in the culture, in the religion, they built what we have today,” he said. He noted that the event marked the formal beginning of a year-long series of educational, cultural and religious activities commemorating the 120th anniversary, including an upcoming observance for World Greek Language Day and commemorations for the national holiday on March 25.

George Goulakos whose family is among those honoured as early established families, spoke about the obligation to project Greek identity beyond the community itself. “We have a beautiful culture and a beautiful history, and we as Greeks and as Hellenes have got to start spreading the word amongst other people,” he said. “Let us stand up and show people who and what we are as people, as a community and as citizens of the world.” He recalled that his uncles had been present on these grounds as early as 1910.

George Maris and his son Adrian, representing the family of past HCGM president Adrian Maris, re-counted how the elder Maris rallied the general assembly in the basement of St. George’s Church to vote for the construction of the community centre, and how former prime minister Konstantinos Kara-manlis and Melina Mercouri, then minister of culture, marvelled at the speed of its completion. Adrian Maris, the grandson, spoke of the privilege of growing up trilingual in Montreal. “To be able to have that honour, that privilege here in this very great city of ours, so far away from Greece, yet so well educated and always looking towards the future,” he said. “It is really great to be a part of that.”

Kostas Milonopoulos, former president of the Greek Orthodox Community of Laval, who arrived in Montreal in 1955 and served at Holy Trinity under Father Salamis, recalled the church hall’s library of Greek-Christian culture, youth sports played at the adjacent Mont Saint-Louis, and friendships that evolved into families over five decades of volleyball matches. “Many of my friends found wives here, got married,” he said, tracing a line from those early gatherings to the broader institutional expansion that followed.

Jimmy Zoubris, a longtime community member visiting the building for the first time in approximately 20 years, said entering it brought back vivid memories of the former church and its offices. “It brings me back to a time when we were all here,” he said. “Behind you I see the staircase that used to lead up to the offices of the community. It is good that the history of Hellenism in Montreal still lives in the heart of Montreal.”

Aglaia Revelakis, the municipal councillor for Chomedey Laval, praised the organizing committee. “When we walked in and saw the old photographs of people who sacrificed everything to work hard, without the language, to build what we have today, we must be very proud,” she said. “This is our history, and these are the customs we must pass on to our children.”

The evening concluded with a formal blessing and dinner, after which guests continued to circulate among the photographs, contributing names and details to help identify figures from the past. The program ended as scheduled, marking the official launch of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal’s 120th anniversary celebrations at the historic site of the former Holy Trinity Church.

Ημέρα μνήμης για το Ολοκαύτωμα των αδελφών μας Εβραίων



Χαράλαμπος ΚΑΤΣΙΒΑΡΔΑΣ
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Η Διεθνής μνήμη του ολοκαυτώματος των αδελφών Ελλήνων Εβραίων αλλά και των απανταχού της Γης, τιμάται δεόντως την 27η Ιανουαρίου λόγω ακριβώς της απελευθερώσεως του στρατοπέδου συγκεντρώσεως «Άουσβιτς», από το Κόκκινο Στρατό την 27-1-1945.

Η εν λόγω ημέρα, τιμάται, ο άνθρωπος και εντατικοποιείται η μνήμη, για να μην επαναληφθεί πότε τέτοιας μορφής γενοκτονία, όπως το ολοκαύτωμα 6.000.000 Εβραίων, υπό την κτηνώδη θηριωδία των Ναζιστικών Στρατευμάτων.

Ήδη σήμερον, απέχουμε 81 συναπτά έτη, εκ της τραγικής εκείνης περιόδου, όπου η ανθρωπότητα θρήνησε, την ανείπωτη φρίκη, την ειδεχθών βασανιστηρίων των Εβραίων, μία ρητορική μίσους συνδυασμένη με φαιά προπαγάνδα, ερειδόμενη σε ψευδή γεγονότα για την ζωή των Εβραίων, προκειμένου, αφενός να δικαιολογήσουν την αποτρόπαιη πράξη τους και εξ ετέρου να ισχυροποιήσουν το άλλοθι της ανωτέρας «Αρίας» φυλής.

Εν άλλοις, λόγοις, ο ραστσισμός, ο μισαλλόδοξος λόγος και ο στιγματισμός των Εβραίων με αποφασιστικό κριτήριο την θρησκεία, και την εθνοφυλετική καταγωγή, ώθησαν την Ναζιστική Γερμανία, εις το απεχθέστερο έγκλημα της Ιστορίας της ανθρωπότητας, εξ ού και η Ιερά ταύτη ημέρα, δέον όπως τιμάται προσηκόντως ούτως ώστε να διασωθεί δεόντος, νυν και εις το διηνεκές η ανεξίτηλη αυτή μνήμη ούτως ώστε, οι επιγενόμενες γενεές, αφενός να γνωρίζουν εν ευροία εννοία και εξ ετέρου να συμβάλλουν εις την πρόνοια καταπολεμήσεως του αυγού του φιδιού.

Είναι πρόδηλο ότι η διεθνής γλώσσα του αντισημιτισμού καθίσταται ο ολοκληρωτισμός, με όποιο ιδεολογικό μανδύα και εάν παριάπτεται, κατά καιρούς εις την ιστορία.

Ως εκ τούτου, η αφετηρία της μνήμης, η διαχρονική διάσωση και η εξακολούθηση περιφρούρησεώς της καθοιονδήποτε πρόσφορο τρόπο, τόσο δια τελετών μνήμης, τόσο δια της αρθρογραφίας αλλά και δια της διδασκαλίας εις τα σχολεία ανά το κόσμο δέον όπως εξαπλωθεί εν ακαρεί χρόνω, προκειμένου να μην επαναληφθούν τέτοιους είδους εγκλήματα εις το μέλλον.

Είναι πρόδηλον όμως σήμερον, ότι ο αντισημιτισμός, ή ο νέο-αντισημιτισμός έχει ξεκινήσει, βαθμηδόν, να αναβιώνει, ανά τον κόσμο, λόγω ενός ψευδώνουμου αντιδυτικού κινήματος το οποίο ενστερνίζεται την εξτρεμιστική-τρομοκρατική πτυχή του Ισλάμ, δαιμονοποιώντας το Κράτος του Ισραήλ και τους πολίτες τους.

Το νέο ιδεολογικό υπόβαθρο του σύγχρονου αντισημιτισμού, απαιτεί ιδιαίτατη προσοχή και επαγρύπνηση καθότι, εκτείνεται προς μίας συλλήβδην απαξίωση και επίθεση κατά του Κράτους του Ισραήλ και των Πολιτών και δεν περιορίζεται απλώς σε τυχόν διαφωνία η αντιπαράθεση με την ασκουμένη πολιτική



εκ μέρους της εφαρμοσμένης πολιτικής του Ισραήλ.

Υπάρχουν δύο διαφορετικά πράγματα, δηλαδή, άλλο το Ισραήλ ως έθνος Κράτος και άλλο η πολιτική, πλην όμως, εισέτι και σήμερον εν έτει 2026, ορούμε, ότι υποβόσκει, μία ανατροφοδότηση της προσφυής «Εβραιοφοβίας», η οποία πρέπει να εντοπισθεί ούτως ώστε να εκριζωθεί δομικά και δημοκρατικά.

Εν κατακλείδι, εξ αφορμής της ημέρας μνήμης ας τελούμε εν εγρηγόρσει και επιφυλακή, προκειμένου να συνειδητοποιήσουμε την σοβαρότητα του ολοκαυτώματος και ας προχωρήσουμε, προς νέα πραγματικότητα, με απόλυτη, ευαισθησία για την ανθρώπινη αξία και την ολοχερή εξάλειψη του ρατσισμού και φυλετικών διακρίσεων, ως ένα κεκτημένο του Δυτικού Πολιτισμού.

Το Ισραήλ συνιστά μία κοιλίδα Ελευθερίας στην Δυτικό Κόσμο και καθ΄΄ ον τρόπον ημείς πρέπει να το αντιμετωπίζουμε, διατηρώντας τις αναγκαίες διπλωματικές ισορροπίες με τις γείτονες χώρες.

Χαράλαμπος β Κατσιβαρδάς
Δικηγόρος Παρ’ Αρείω Πάγω και Σ.τ.Ε
Ανεξάρτητος Βουλευτής

44 Greek veterans identified at historic Pointe-Claire cemetery



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The grey granite markers stand in solemn formation across the snow-dusted grounds of the National Field of Honour in Pointe-Claire, a silent testament to the thousands who served under the Canadian flag. The air here carries a heavy stillness suitable for a National Historic Site that holds the remains of more than 22,000 service members. Within these ordered rows rests a distinct and historically significant cohort of approximately 44 Greek-Canadian veterans whose service spans the defining conflicts of the twentieth century. Their presence on this hallowed ground represents a profound intersection of Hellenic heritage and Canadian military history that has remained largely under-examined until now.

This cemetery in Montreal's West Island serves as the final resting place for Canadian and Allied veterans and embodies a principle of absolute egalitarianism in death. The recently identified group of Greek-Canadian veterans includes individuals who fought in the Second World War, the Korean War and other conflicts. These men navigated the dual realities of the immigrant experience and military service. Their stories have often been absorbed into the broader archives of the Last Post Fund, yet they remain a vital chapter of the Greek diaspora in Canada. The preservation of their memory speaks directly to the obligation of the community to honour those who laid the foundation for the freedoms enjoyed today.

The discovery and commemoration of these veterans has transitioned from a purely archival exercise into a profound act of public and spiritual remembrance. On December 7, 2024, a landmark Trisagion memorial service was held directly on the cemetery grounds to honour these 44 individuals. The event, organized by Vimy MP Annie Koutrakis and Lac-Saint-Louis MP Francis Scarpaleggia, marked the first time the Greek-Canadian community formally gathered at the site to pay tribute to its own. Father Cristian officiated the solemn Orthodox rite, chanting the ancient hymn for the "repose of the souls" of the departed servants of God.

The atmosphere was heavy with emotion and cultural pride. Students from the Socrates-Demosthenes School, the educational crown jewel of the Hellenic



Community of Greater Montreal (HCGM), stood as an honour guard, waving Greek flags in the winter air. Their presence symbolized the transmission of memory to a new generation, connecting the youth directly to the sacrifices of their ancestors. Families of the veterans lit candles at the graves, a deeply personal act of remembrance that bridged the gap between the formal military setting and the intimate traditions of the Greek Orthodox faith. The event was not merely a ceremony; it was a reclamation of identity, asserting that these men, though buried under uniform military markers, were sons of Greece as much as they were soldiers of Canada.

This spiritual mobilization runs parallel to an intense political advocacy campaign aimed at securing the cemetery's future. The Last Post Fund, which has owned and operated the site since 1930, faces increasing financial challenges in maintaining the cemetery in perpetuity. This uncertainty has prompted a mobilization within the community to ensure the federal government assumes responsibility for the site. Former diplomat Robert Peck and Annie Koutrakis have spearheaded a parliamentary petition that calls upon the Government of Canada to nationalize the cemetery.

The petition underscores the significance of the site not just as a cemetery but as a symbol of Canada's international engagement and sovereignty. The cemetery holds the remains of veterans from 23 allied countries, including 44 from Greece, 78 from the United States, 101 from France, and 380 from Poland. The initiative seeks to align the status of the Pointe-Claire site with other federally owned veterans' cemeteries in Halifax and Esquimalt. Supporters of the movement argue that the federal acquisition of the land is the only viable path to guarantee the dignified treatment of these veterans for future generations.

This push for federal ownership aligns with commitments made during the 2025 federal election campaign. The Liberal Party of Canada platform document titled *Canada Strong* included a specific promise to assume ownership of the National Field of Honour. A written undertaking from the Minister of Veterans Affairs in July 2025 further identified this transfer as a government priority. The current advocacy efforts aim to hold the government to this pledge and secure a definitive timeline for the transition.

The year 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, presenting a unique opportunity to honour the surviving members of that generation. The preservation of the National Field of Honour is positioned by advocates as a matter of national duty. The presence of Greek names among the rows of identical markers serves as a permanent reminder of the contribution made by Greek-Canadians to the defence of Canada and its allies. These veterans were part of a generation that bridged the gap between the old country and their new home through service and sacrifice.

The 44 Greek veterans identified at the site are more than statistics; they represent the "unmarked vanguard" of the community's history. While public records of their individual names remain sparse, their collective story is one of resilience. They enlisted during an era when the Greek army was repelling Italian invaders in the mountains of Albania, a victory that galvanized the diaspora globally. They fought for Canada while their homeland endured brutal occupation. Today, their legacy is guarded by organizations like AHEPA and the HCGM, which view the veneration of military service as a core pillar of civic duty. The involvement of high-profile figures like retired Ambassadors Robert Peck and Peter MacArthur—both of whom have fathers buried at the site—demonstrates that this cause transcends political lines and touches the heart of the community's leadership.

The petition specifically requests that Veterans Affairs Canada and Canadian Heritage develop an agreed action plan with the Last Post Fund. The petitioners urge the government to announce this plan by November 11, 2026. This date would serve as a symbolic milestone to honour the surviving veterans of the Second World War. The effort to secure the cemetery's future is portrayed by community leaders as an essential act of remembrance that reinforces the Hellenic identity and its integration into the fabric of Canadian history.

Electronic Petition e-6951 remains open for signature on the website of the House of Commons until March 20, 2026 here (or scan QR Code):

https://www.ourcommons.ca/petitions/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-6951

Hellenic Congress of Quebec emphasizes need for more Greek-Canadian candidates in provincial elections



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The golden light of communal purpose filled the Mikri-Vouli hall as members of the Hellenic Congress of Quebec gathered to chart a course for the future of the diaspora in a spirit of renewed unity and patriotic dedication. This assembly, which followed the rescheduling of the meeting from early December due to a crowded calendar of community events, served as a profound affirmation of Greek identity and a strategic pivot toward increasing the presence of Hellenes within the halls of Canadian governance. The evening was defined by a shared understanding that the preservation of Greek heritage in Quebec requires not only the celebration of the past but also a sophisticated and organized approach to contemporary civic engagement.

The General Assembly of the Hellenic Congress of Quebec, held on January 29, 2026, marked a significant milestone as 17 member organizations and 19 representatives convened at the offices of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal. This gathering was particularly poignant given that the session had been delayed from its original December 7, 2025, date to ensure that the many competing cultural festivities of the season did not dilute the focus on this vital democratic exercise. The atmosphere was described as one of exceptional calm and high spirits, a welcome shift from previous periods of internal friction. Under the steady leadership of Sotiris Antypas, who was ultimately re-elected as president, the organization has moved past a previous era of conflict characterized by some as a period of crisis and aggression.

Reflecting on the achievements of the past two years, Antypas presented a report that highlighted the meticulous work of committees dedicated to social and political policy. These committees have been active in drafting and submitting formal positions to all levels of government, including the federal administration in Ottawa, the provincial government of Quebec, and various municipal bodies. A central focus of these efforts has been the critical analysis of Bill 1, which the leadership described as a dangerous rearrangement regarding constitutional matters rather than a productive development. The congress has also focused on providing tangible support for the community, ensuring that the Greek voice is heard in the hallowed chambers where policy is decided.

The mission of the Hellenic Congress of Quebec remains deeply rooted in the promotion of Hellenic values and the cultivation of the next generation of leaders. Antypas emphasized that a primary goal for the upcoming two-year term is to prepare and support young Greek-Canadians for careers in provincial politics. With provincial elections on the horizon, the congress views the current political landscape as an opportunity for the community to exert its influence. The leadership noted that several political parties are currently seeking to rebuild and are actively looking for representatives from established communities who can provide strong, reliable support. This strategy of political grooming is seen as essential for maintaining the vitality of the Greek presence in Quebec and ensuring that the needs of the diaspora are not overlooked by the broader electorate.

The conversation during the assembly also touched upon the nuances of municipal engagement and the lessons learned from recent local elections. Participants discussed the challenges faced by Greek candidates, such as Mary Deros and Georgia Haloulos, noting that the congress remains committed to providing a platform for such individuals. The discussion highlighted the complexities of local governance, where the successes or failures of a municipal administration can often impact the standing of individual councillors regardless of their personal efforts or party affiliations. There was a clear consensus that the community must stand united behind its candidates to ensure that Hellenic representation remains robust in every district where Greeks reside.

The organizational structure of the new board reflects a blend of experience and fresh energy, designed to carry out the ambitious agenda set for the next two years. Joining Sotiris Antypas on the executive council are first vice-president Yannis Theodosopoulos, second vice-president Voula Neofotistou, and third vice-president Angelos Aravantinos, who represents the Concordia University Student Association. The administrative functions will be managed by secretary Massimo Briganti and treasurer Dimitra Kostaridi, while Dimitris Tsikalas and Antonia Macris will serve as coordinators. The broader board of directors includes Justin Frangouli, Andreas Krilis, Michalis Kalyvas, Demetrios Katsaounis, Mania Papadopoulos, Pantelis Papamichalopoulos, and Petros Stavropoulos. This diverse group is tasked with managing the bureaucratic and strategic needs of the congress as it enters what has been described as a bright new era for the community.

This new chapter coincides with the beginning of celebratory events marking 120 years of the Greek community in the region. The leadership views this anniversary as an opportunity for a rebranding of the community, highlighting the beauty and strength of Hellenic culture to the wider public. By inviting the media and the general public to join in these festivities, the congress hopes to foster a sense of pride and collective purpose that will sustain the organization through its future endeavors. The success of the political conference held last December, which drew participation from federal, provincial, and municipal officials, serves as a testament to the growing influence of the congress and its ability to act as a bridge between the Greek-Canadian people and the state.

The assembly concluded with a focus on the practical work ahead, including the ongoing development of policy documents that outline the positions of the congress on social and political issues. These documents, which have been shared with various levels of government, represent a highly organized effort to advocate for the community. The leadership expressed a strong desire for the media to remain closely involved in the activities of the congress, helping to broadcast the achievements and goals of the new administration to the wider diaspora. As the meeting drew to a close, the sense of optimism was palpable, with members looking forward to a period of stability and growth under the guidance of a board committed to the long-term prosperity of Hellenism in Quebec.

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Happy Valentine's Day



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Montreal audience hears call for unity and service from AHEPA Supreme President



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Beneath the soft glow of chandeliers and the blue and white of Hellenic flags carefully arranged along the walls, members of the Greek community gathered in Montreal in a spirit of fraternity and pride to welcome the Supreme President of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association. Conversations moved easily between Greek and English, elders greeting long standing brothers of the Order while younger members observed with attentive curiosity. The visit formed part of a broader January tour that included Toronto and Ottawa, yet in Montreal the emphasis fell squarely on community cohesion, philanthropy and the enduring responsibility of preserving Hellenic identity in Canada.

The Supreme President, Chris Kaitson, arrived in Eastern Canada accompanied by Canadian Order President Anastasios Moussas, meeting chapters in Region Twenty Three across Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa. In remarks shared with members, Kaitson reflected on what he described as the vitality of the organization in this country. “My visit to the chapters of Region Twenty Three in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa clearly demonstrated that the strength of AHEPA and Hellenism in Canada is thriving,” he stated, adding that the Order remains “a family, united beyond borders, with common goals and common ideals.”

The Montreal chapter organized a formal gathering that blended ceremony with fellowship. Members stood as the visiting delegation was introduced, followed by a chapter meeting welcoming the Supreme President, as outlined in correspondence circulated to the membership. The tone throughout the evening balanced respect for institutional tradition with a distinctly local character shaped by Montreal’s long established Greek presence.

AHEPA, founded in 1922 in the United States to combat discrimination and promote the integration and advancement of Greek immigrants, has since grown into an international fraternal organization dedicated to the promotion of Hellenic ideals, education, philanthropy and civic responsibility. Its mission emphasizes support for Greek language and culture, scholarship programs, charitable initiatives and the strengthening of ties between the diaspora and Greece and Cyprus. In Canada, the Order has played a consistent role in community life, supporting educational programs, church initiatives and cultural events that keep the Greek language and traditions visible to younger generations.

During the Eastern Canada tour, that commitment to education and heritage was tangible. In Toronto, members presented a fifty thousand dollar donation to the Gennadius Library in Athens, a repository of more than one hundred thousand volumes devoted to Greek history, literature and art. The gesture resonated in Montreal as well, where discussions frequently turned to the preservation of archives, language programs and cultural memory within the diaspora.

The Supreme President’s meetings extended beyond chapter halls. In Toronto he conferred with the Consul General of Greece and the Greek Trade Commissioner, exploring avenues to strengthen Greek Canadian ties. In Montreal, conversations centered on collaboration among community organizations and on ensuring that philanthropic efforts respond to contemporary needs. Local leaders underscored the importance of coordinated action among associations, parishes and cultural groups in a city where the Greek presence spans several generations.

George Tsitouras, a Montreal member active in professional and philanthropic



At centre, Montreal AHEPA Chapter President Timothy P. Tzanakos (left) presents a donation to George Tsitouras (right), honorary president of the Socrates School fundraising initiative, during the Supreme President’s visit to Montreal.

circles, described the visit as an opportunity to reaffirm common purpose. In written remarks shared with THE MONTREAL GREEK TIMES, he noted that gatherings of this nature “remind us that we are part of a global Hellenic network, and that our local initiatives in Montreal contribute to something much larger.”

For long time Montreal AHEPA members, the evening also carried a personal dimension. One senior member recalled joining the Order decades earlier at a time when Greek immigrants sought both solidarity and social advancement. “We wanted our children to succeed in Canada and remain proud of being Greek,” he said. That aspiration remains present today, though expressed through scholarships, mentorship programs and charitable drives rather than the early struggles against exclusion that marked the organization’s beginnings.

Younger attendees spoke of a different yet related motivation. A university student whose parents emigrated from northern Greece explained that involvement in AHEPA offers structured engagement with heritage beyond family celebrations. “It gives us a framework to serve, to give back, and to connect with Greece in meaningful ways,” she said, pointing to initiatives supporting education and humanitarian relief.

The visit also highlighted the Order’s charitable reach. In Montreal, members outlined ongoing support for local causes, including assistance to community institutions and families facing hardship. While the Supreme President’s tour carried ceremonial elements, the substance of the discussions focused on practical action: fundraising targets, membership growth and intergenerational engagement.

Throughout the evening, the Greek language flowed naturally in speeches and informal exchanges. Toasts were offered to Hellenism, to Canada and to the enduring bond between them. The symbolism was unmistakable yet grounded in lived experience. In a city where Greek schools, churches and cultural associations continue to shape communal life, such visits reinforce the sense that local efforts are connected to a broader international movement dedicated to preserving Hellenic identity.

The Eastern Canada tour concluded after engagements in Ottawa, where chapter members similarly welcomed the delegation and reaffirmed their commitment to the Order’s mission. In Montreal, the evening closed with a formal chapter meeting and fellowship among members and guests, marking the end of the Supreme President’s official visit to the city.

Board meeting highlights growth in philanthropy and educational programs



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"Let us cooperate and work with love and peace and move forward for the good of the community" President Basile Angelopoulos urged a gathered assembly in the Mikri Vouli chamber on February 3 2026. The atmosphere at the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal (HCGM) head office was one of measured gravity and growing hope, as the board of directors sat to mark the first major meeting of its 120th anniversary year. The evening served as a study in the complexity of modern civic management, balancing the lofty, patriotic ideals of the 1906 founders with the detailed management of a $7-million debt load and the minor frictions of institutional logistics.

The meeting began with a call to order and a prayer, but the weight of the community’s financial health quickly took centre stage. Angelopoulos reported what he described as a historic shift in the organization’s fiscal trajectory. While the general assembly had previously adopted a budget projecting an operating deficit of $475,000, the president announced that six months of tight management has placed the community in a likely surplus position of approximately $200,000. This fiscal discipline is part of a broader reorganization of the labour force. Anelopoulos noted he has spent the last month acting as a "hemorrhoid" for the finance team, a self-deprecating nod to his constant oversight as the bank remains anxious to see the community perform against its promises.

The optimism of the reported surplus was contextualized by the detailed Treasury Report. As of January 29, 2026, the HCGM’s estimated outstanding liabilities totaled $6,974,686. The BMO line of credit stood at $1,812,616, leaving some remaining borrowing capacity against its $2-million limit. The report also detailed three non-revolving demand and term loans totaling more than $3.4 million, with the interest rate on the third term loan noted at 6.45 per cent. Accounts payable for the general and social funds sat at a combined $1,722,570. The finance committee noted that work is ongoing to meet bank requests for a 12-month cash flow forecast and a three-year capital expenditure plan to ensure the debt restructuring remains on its positive track.

Beyond the ledger, the meeting delved into the "human context" of the community’s survival, specifically the need to rejuvenate a membership base that currently sees 2,600 renewals pending in the first half of 2026. This objective led to a candid discussion regarding a recent initiative to have students and alumni speak at church Vasilopita events. The treasurer, Mrs. Chilakos, expressed deep disappointment after a initiative intended to give youth a platform faced institutional hurdles. While churches in Laval and the South Shore, specifically Holy Cross, St. Nicholas, and St. John the Baptist, welcomed the students, the initiative was turned down by all community churches on the island of Montreal. In an email sent late on January 6 2026, priests from the island churches characterized the presentations as a "sales pitch" inappropriate for a "sacred and holy event ." This friction, likely stemming from a lack of coordination or a misunderstanding of the long-term goal, underscored the irony that the very members the drive sought to recruit are those who have historically built and sustained the churches.

Despite these institutional tensions, the spirit of "philotimo" remained a recurring and uplifting theme. The board is implementing "philanthropy boxes" in classrooms to teach children the value of giving, noting that "no matter how much we think we need, some other child needs even more ." This educational initiative is paired with a $10 donation drive per student to fund projects within their own schools. On the cultural front, the 120th anniversary celebrations have officially launched, with the "Our Roots, Our Journey" event honoring founding families and a planned "Youth Wave" party series designed to engage adolescents with their heritage.

The meeting also highlighted the physical stewardship of the community’s assets. Renovations at the Foyer Hellenique common room are 99 per cent complete, a project costing $3,524 that relied heavily on generous donations. Work has also begun on the entrance of St. George’s Cathedral, which will include new flooring and "pagaria" candle stands. The secretary of real estate and procurement noted that while a legal battle continues over the roof of the Grande Salle, an inventory has been completed to assist with government grant applications.

As the session moved toward its conclusion, the focus shifted to accountability and outreach. Questions were raised regarding media invitations for the anniversary press conference, with leadership clarifying that invitations were sent to all major community media. The board emphasized that the anniversary belongs to the entire community, and that transparency would remain a priority as gala planning progresses with a symbolic ticket price of $120.

The evening's reports were finalized with updates on the upcoming March 29 parade on Jean-Talon Street, which will coincide with a wreath-laying ceremony at Laval City Hall on March 28. The board moved to adopt the various reports, noting that the FindJoo membership CRM deployment is targeted for completion by late February. The meeting concluded at the HCGM head office with a final motion to adjourn, as members were encouraged to stay informed through the community’s official digital calendar.

Hellenic traditions and history formally recognized in Laval



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Under the bright lights of Laval's council chamber, framed by the flags of Canada, Laval and Quebec and before a gallery filled with leaders of the Hellenic diaspora, a moment of civic recognition unfolded that carried both symbolic and historical weight. In an atmosphere marked by applause, pride and cross party support, the City of Laval formally proclaimed March as Greek Heritage Month, affirming the enduring presence of one of the city's most dynamic communities and underscoring themes of democratic legacy, cultural continuity and collective identity.

The motion, tabled by Chomedey Coun. Aglaia Revelakis, called on the city to proclaim "the month of March as Greek Heritage Month in the City of Laval and encourage all residents to participate in activities and events celebrating the history, culture and Hellenic contributions to our community". The proposition, received on January 13 and signed by Revelakis , was adopted unanimously at the February 4 council meeting.

Speaking at the podium, Revelakis addressed council in French, her voice steady and deliberate as she reflected on more than a century of Hellenic contribution in Quebec. "Today, I am proud to present this proposition to proclaim the month of March as Greek Heritage Month," she said, describing it as "an important opportunity to celebrate and highlight the rich history, culture and enduring contributions of the Hellenic community". She reminded councillors that for over 120 years, individuals of Greek origin have played "a significant role in the social, economic, cultural and civic development of our society, guided by values such as resilience, family, education and community engagement".

Her words echoed the formal language of the written notice of proposition, which referenced the democratic principles rooted in ancient Hellenic traditions and recognized March 25 as Greek Independence Day, commemorating the beginning of Greece's struggle for independence in 1821. The motion also noted that more than 30,000 Laval residents are of Greek origin and that the city is home to two churches and two primary schools serving the community.

The chamber itself reflected this civic and cultural convergence. In one image captured during the meeting, councillors sat in a semicircle beneath studio lights, as Revelakis presented her remarks. In another, community leaders gathered for a commemorative photograph, standing shoulder to shoulder in front of the council dais. Among those present were Sotirios Antipas, president of the Hellenic Congress of Quebec; Justine Fragouli-Argyris, president of the Lyceum of Greek Women and head of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal's 120 year anniversary committee; Katerina Hullis, regional president for Montreal Laval; Zissis Fotopoulos, president of the Pan Arcadian Brotherhood of Canada; and Costas Milonopoulos, past president of the former Greek Orthodox Community of Laval. Their presence underscored the institutional depth and continuity of Hellenism in the region.

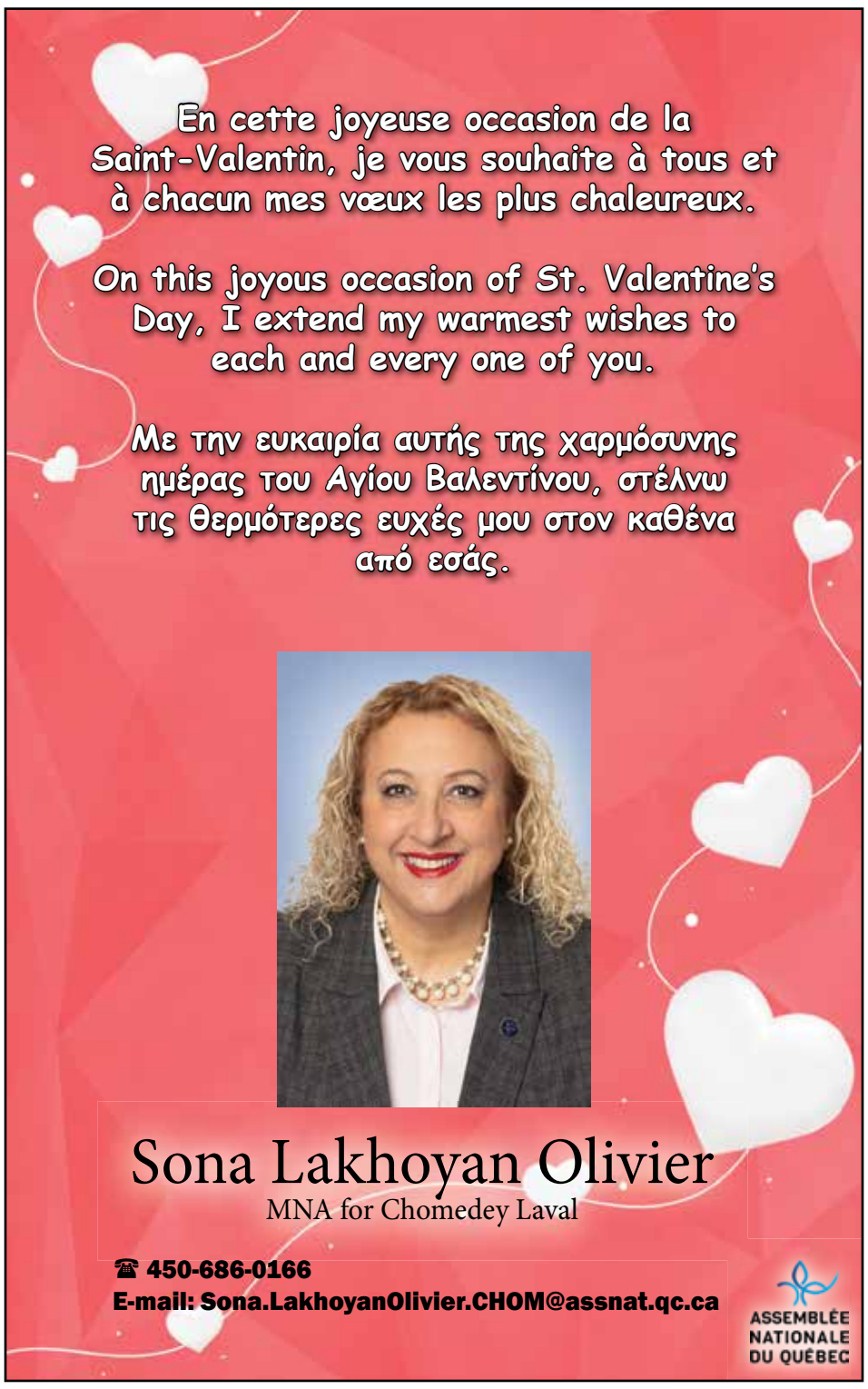
Coun. Aline Dib, representing Mayor Stéphane Boyer, rose in support of the motion and saluted the community's sustained engagement in Laval's civic life. She highlighted the city's participation in Greek Independence Day commemorations and the wreath laying ceremonies held annually in Laval, as well as the vibrant festivals that animate neighbourhoods across Chomedey. "The Laval community of Greek origin contributes significantly to the development of the city," she said, adding that its involvement, both economic and community based, actively strengthens social cohesion and quality of life.

Opposition councillors also voiced their support. David De Cotis of Action Laval noted that Laval is home to one of the largest Hellenic communities in Quebec and that recognizing its contribution is both natural and warranted. Louise Lortie of Parti Laval acknowledged the community's integration and long-standing presence, expressing appreciation for what Greek Quebecers and Greek Canadians have brought to the city's social and cultural fabric.

For Revelakis, the proclamation carried a personal dimension rooted in her own family's story. In her closing remarks, she spoke of her pride as a Greek Canadian and Quebecer who began her life in Laval in 1980, and she referenced the upcoming 50th anniversary of Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Laval. Her words resonated with many in the audience who have witnessed the transformation of Laval from a growing suburb to a major urban centre shaped in part by immigrant enterprise, cultural associations and parish life.

The written proposition further situated the local motion within a national framework, citing federal Bill S-220, which seeks to recognize March as Hellenic Heritage Month across Canada. By aligning Laval with this broader legislative initiative, council affirmed that the city's recognition forms part of a wider Canadian acknowledgment of Hellenic heritage.

As the debate concluded, the council chair confirmed that there were no further requests to speak. The motion was put to a vote and adopted unanimously, with congratulations extended to Revelakis and the Greek community of Laval.





Holy Trinity's enduring flame

forty years since the fire that forged our greek community

By Dimitri Papadopoulos,
with files from John Coconas



A rare photograph from the Opening of the Doors of Holy Trinity.

The morning air in Montreal often carries a biting chill in January, but forty years ago, the atmosphere around the corner of Sherbrooke Street and Clark was thick with a different kind of intensity as the skyline was overtaken by towering plumes of smoke and the searing glow of a tragedy in progress. Looking back at the photographs from that day, one sees the desperate height of the ladders and the silhouette of the belfry against a grey sky, a sight that marked the beginning of a profound era of reflection for the Hellenic community. This milestone serves as a moment to examine the deep historical roots of the Greek diaspora in Montreal, the persistent struggle for cultural preservation through education and faith, and the unbreakable spirit of a people who turned the ashes of their first cathedral into a foundation for future generations.

It was January 16, 1986, a date many in the community still refer to as a day of ill omen when the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, the first Greek church ever established in Canada, was surrendered to a fiery hell. The news was carried live by television channels and radio stations, prompting hundreds of Greeks from every corner of the city and the suburbs to leave their jobs and head toward the site of the disaster. They were driven by a strange feeling and a soul deep desire to be close, to intervene, and to help prevent the evil. They hoped to stop the wrath of Hephaestus and save their beloved church, the one they called "Ayiatriàda". Helpless to do anything, they screamed and cried out of anger and indignation, as defined by all those feelings that sprang indefinitely from their souls.

The images of their lives were interwoven with the church, and those memories played out in the reflections of the fire during those terrible moments. It was a moment too large to fit a whole history, the history of the Greeks which was written so strongly, so bravely, and so truly within the walls of the church. The fiery tongues poured out from the vitals of the Holy Trinity, massive and powerful, as if a giant flaming soul was anxious to touch the heavens. There was no salvation left. The smoke, which signaled the end of the evil, came like an unprecedented scent to soften the harsh atmosphere of that frozen January. There was no talk or discussion, as the only sounds were the creaks in the embers and the lamentations and sobs of the Greeks.

Holy Trinity had been surrendered to the fire forty years ago, yet the memories remain vivid because the church represented two great pieces of history. One part preceded the fire and the other followed it. The first section contains the difficult years of creation, the efforts and the visions of the first immigrants to take root in the new homeland. The second section covers everything that followed the 1986 blaze. This church emerged from a great evil, the division caused by the political passions of the Greeks in the early twentieth century, only to leave through another great evil, the impasse created by the mistakes of the Greeks.

The history of the community is tied to the events of August 10, 1920, in the grand hall of the city hall of Sèvres, France, where the reality of a Greece of two continents and five seas was taking shape. The creator of New Greece, Eleftherios Venizelos, certified with his signature that the dream of the Hellenic nation was marching through the lands of Ionia, Pontus, and Eastern Thrace. After the Treaty of Sèvres, the dream of the Great Idea had almost become a reality. Greece became the state of two continents and five seas, but unfortunately, this lasted only two years. National division lurked at this critical moment for Greece. Furthermore, the political and economic interests of the European powers, who were friends and allies of Greece, supported Turkey, which was their opponent in the First World War. The consequence of these events was the collapse of the Asia Minor front in August 1922, the disorderly retreat and departure of the Greek army and population.

While King Constantine was in exile in Switzerland, his followers were planning the physical elimination of the creator of Great Greece. The plan for the assassination of Eleftherios Venizelos, at the moment he was returning to Greece with the Treaty of Sèvres in his briefcase, unfolded at the edge of the Lyon railway station. The hospitalization of Venizelos for his slight injury after the attempt of July 30, 1920, forced him to postpone his return to Greece for a few days and reach Piraeus with the battleship Averof on August 17. These events in the motherland did not leave the Greeks abroad unaffected. The small Greek colony of Montreal experienced the division and received terrible influences that interrupted the until then admirable path toward the completion of its visions. The newly founded community became a victim of the disastrous division. Those who just a few years before were united and struggling to stand as a cultural community in their new homeland found themselves facing each other through an unprecedented rivalry of hatred and enmity.

Divided into Venizelists and Royalists, the Greeks of Montreal fought battles of mutual extermination with such contradictions that violent acts, including beatings and stonings, occurred inside and outside the church of the Annunciation. The Annunciation was the first church of the Greeks, and on May 5, 1910, the foundation stone of the first Greek Orthodox community church was placed on the purchased lot at 753 Saint Lawrence Boulevard. Eight months later, on December 10, 1910, the inauguration of the first Greek Orthodox church of Canada took place with the name Annunciation of the Theotokos. For fifteen long years, the bickering and division undoubtedly slowed progress in the community. However, these disagreements eventually led to the successful purchase of the Holy Trinity complex, in which Hellenism had placed all its hopes and visions, since its value reached six million dollars.

On December 3, 1931, after the wretched division subsided, the two rival Greek Orthodox communities decided in a spirit of harmony to merge into one united, brotherly, and agreeing community named the Holy Trinity. George Vasilakis wrote in his book about Canada being the country of the bright future and the Hellenism within it: "At the same time that the Greek Orthodox Community of the 'Annunciation of the Virgin Mary,' omitting all the essentials, was daily involved in personal altercations, torn in the middle of contradictions and stubbornness, which had divided and turned it into a true arena of unbridled political passions, paradoxology, demagoguery and often fistfights, and while mutual fighting and stonings with manifest hostility continued between even those families of 'royalists' and 'venizelists' in the middle of the street and the indecencies and improprieties inside and outside of the Holy Temple of the parish....".

The actual purchase of the Holy Trinity building took place in August 1925, while the hatreds still divided the Greeks. A group of "hot blooded Venizelists" led by G. Kalfakis, N. Fragalexis, T. Skaperdas, N. Manolakos, A. Peppas, P. Charalambous, K. Karakasis, A. Naoum, G. Mytilineos, P. Goulakos, K. Alexopoulos, S. Rondogiannis, E. Papadakis, V. Xenakis, M. Chatzidakis, D. Apostolopoulos, P. Adamako and many others still "venizelists," broke away from the community of the Annunciation. At the beginning of August 1925, with a down-payment of two thousand dollars, they purchased for fifty thousand dollars of credit the Methodist church at the corner of Sherbrooke and Clark. On December 25 of that same year, the church was renovated and handed over to Orthodox worship in the name of the Holy Trinity, with Archimandrite A. Pallikaris presiding.

The relevant minutes of the eventual merger were signed on behalf of the Greek Orthodox community of the Annunciation by Panagiotis Merakos, Dimitrios Theodoropoulos, Apostolos Zarafonitis, Konstantinos Kourtis, Nikolaos Tzelos, Spyros Kolyvas, and Panagiotis Agiorgitis. On behalf of the Greek Orthodox community of the Holy Trinity, the signatories were Spyros Adrianopoulos, Ioannis Spiliotopoulos, Christos Notarios, Nikolaos Beis, Panagiotis Polychronis, Ioannis Apostolakos, Panagiotis Dragonas, Panagiotis Adrianopoulos, Giorgos Gavaris, and Kostas Karakasis. The signing of the union agreement took place in an atmosphere of full enthusiasm and with the blessings of Archimandrite Arsenios Pallikaris. After the unification of the communities of the Annunciation and Holy Trinity, the assets of the Greek Orthodox community of the Annunciation, including the church and the school building, were sold to the Hungarian community for economic reasons. The new Greek Orthodox community of Montreal was then limited to the newly acquired church of the Holy Trinity and the adjacent buildings. After being renovated, these structures served community needs until 1970 as the Socrates community school classrooms.

The twenty year period from 1932 to 1952 is considered the most insignificant because it was not distinguished by large and noteworthy creative efforts. It is important to remember that during this time, an economic crisis, the Second World War, and a Civil War in the motherland took place. During the German occupation from 1941 to 1944, and also during the Civil War from 1944 to 1950, the community contributed unimaginably through the Greek War Relief program to the relief of those who suffered from the war. In the meantime, from 1947 to 1952, the Greek immigrants in Montreal grew from three thousand to five thousand, while the immigration waves that followed after 1950 created large community needs. The Greek Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity and the cramped and unsuitable school building were deemed insufficient.

The focus on heritage remains a priority for Greek officials who visit the diaspora. Panagiotis Skandalakis, the former deputy minister of foreign affairs responsible for subjects concerning Greeks abroad, emphasized that Hellenic education is a priority. He spoke in an interview to the newspaper "Apofasi," saying: "The Greek Minister, in the interview, after thanking the Greeks of the diaspora, who contributed to the financial support of those affected by the deadly earthquake in the countries of SE Asia, mentions that the Diaspora Greeks are a priority for the government, while the goal of its policy with a four year horizon, is the strengthening of their ties with the mother country, the preservation of their national identity, religion, tradition, the Greek language as well as the strengthening of Greek education abroad.". Skandalakis stressed: "the relations he maintains with the expatriates are relations of love and mutual trust.".

Community pride is also reflected in the achievements of its youth and the visits of national figures. A commemorative photo in Toronto shows the junior Alex Pappas standing between Otto Rehhagel and his father while wearing the jersey of Angelos Charisteas, the number nine. Such moments reinforce the importance of maintaining Hellenic identity through sport and public celebration, reminding the community of the historic victory of the Greek national team.

In Quebec, the community continues to navigate its relationship with the provincial government regarding education. Education remains the cornerstone of preserving the Greek language for future generations, and the community remains vigilant in protecting these rights.

The story of the Montreal community is also one of recognizing the first families, our roots. These ceremonies serve to remind the younger generation of the work and dedication required to build and maintain the institutions they use today.

The preservation of history is a continuous task. The community has moved forward from the fire, but it carries the lessons of the past. The legacy of the Holy Trinity lives on in the current structures and the spirit of the Greek Orthodox community of Montreal. The unity achieved after the 1931 merger remains the standard for community action.

In November 1954, community leaders called a general assembly that decided on the immediate establishment of a Special Fund for New Community Buildings. To this account, they transferred sixty-three thousand dollars from the treasury of the community for new community buildings.

The aftermath of the January 16 1986 fire in the next issue of THE MONTREAL GREEK TIMES

Corinthian association celebrates heritage with annual Vasilopita cutting in Laval



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The air inside the community hall in Laval was thick with the scent of traditional Greek spices and the resonant sounds of the homeland as members of the Corinthian Association of Greater Montreal gathered to usher in the new year. Gold and blue flags stood proudly against the walls while a decorated tree twinkled in the corner, setting a festive stage for a night dedicated to the preservation of Hellenic identity and the rekindling of ancestral ties. This gathering represented more than a simple social dinner; it served as a vital cultural bridge for the Peloponnesian diaspora, focusing on the weighty themes of generational continuity, the resilience of regional associations in Quebec, and the sacred nature of the vasilopita ritual in maintaining a sense of belonging far from the shores of the Corinthian Gulf.

The vasilopita tradition remains a cornerstone of Greek life, functioning as a symbolic bridge between the sacred and the secular at the dawn of each year. Known linguistically as Saint Basil's pie, the custom involves the baking of a bread or cake that contains a hidden coin, or flouri, intended to bring divine favour to the individual who discovers it in their portion. While the recipe varies by region from the sweet, brioche-like tsoureki to the custard-based galatopita, the ritual surrounding its distribution is strictly observed. The head of the household or organization etches the sign of the cross over the crust with a knife before slicing pieces in a specific order of precedence, often beginning with symbolic portions for the Lord, Saint Basil, and the poor, before moving through the family by age from the eldest to the youngest. This practice is rooted in a beloved legend where Saint Basil of Caesarea, tasked with returning a collective ransom to the citizens of his city, baked the jewellery into loaves of bread to ensure a fair and miraculous redistribution to the rightful owners. Today, the tradition serves as a primary vehicle for communal blessing, ensuring that the virtues of charity and hope are carried forward into the next twelve months.

The evening was characterized by a profound sense of kefi, that uniquely Greek expression of spirited joy and passion that moved guests to the dance floor shortly after the meal. Men and women joined hands in circular dances, with leaders frequently holding a white handkerchief to allow for the acrobatic twists and deep lunges that characterize the proud dances of the Peloponnese. The energy reached a peak when a member of the association Mr. George Plessas engaged in the traditional act of plate smashing, an exuberant display of high spirits that left white shards scattered across the wooden floor as a testament to the intensity of the celebration.



The custom of plate smashing, though often associated with modern Greek nightlife, carries deep historical and symbolic weight within the context of Hellenic celebration. It is widely considered an expression of kefi so abundant that it must be released through a controlled act of destruction, symbolizing a break from the past or a defiance of the finality of grief and hardship. Some ethnographic theories suggest the practice may have ancient roots related to the concept of the funeral feast, where breaking items served to ward off evil spirits or signify that the living no longer had use for the earthly goods of the deceased. In the contemporary diaspora, the act has evolved into a celebratory ritual often seen at weddings and communal feasts to honour a particularly moving musical performance or a skilled dancer. While many modern venues in Greece have replaced ceramic plates with flowers for safety and economic reasons, the act remains a potent symbol of the Greek spirit's refusal to be dampened by the mundanity of everyday life, transforming a simple piece of crockery into a vehicle for communal catharsis and shared joy.

Association president Maria Brakoulias, who has held her leadership role for two years, spoke to THE MONTREAL GREEK TIMES newspaper with conviction about the necessity of these gatherings for the survival of the group. She noted that the Corinthian Association of Montreal Apostle Paul has deep roots, having been founded in 1968. "Today we held the annual vasilopita," Brakoulias said. "As you know, the Corinthian Association of Montreal has shrunken quite a bit over the years, but we are keeping it quite alive. We try to gather at least once a year. Many members have left unfortunately, but the younger members have kept it. The Corinthian Association of Montreal will not die. We will always be here". She recalled a time during her childhood when her late father served on the board and the association boasted between 700 and 800 members.

The sentiment of duty toward the previous generation was a recurring theme among the guests. Aleka and George, siblings and children of former board members, emphasized that attendance at such events is a debt of honour to their parents. "We must try to give, to rejuvenate the association, because many of the old ones have unfortunately left," Aleka stated. "And others are sick, they have grown older and it is more difficult. That is why those of us who are the other generation try to communicate with people so they can come. Because if they do not come, there will be no association. We owe it to our parents, our fathers, our mothers, everyone". George echoed this perspective, viewing the growth of the community through a lens of momentum. "The more members we have, it is an important thing," he said. "I remember in the past, in the eighties and nineties, it was something positive. We think of the memories and we owe it for our fatherland, the Corinthia. As people come more, this thing will strengthen. It is like a snowball effect".

Personal connections to the soil of the Peloponnese remained at the forefront of the evening's conversations. Vassilios Serfas, a native of Zevgolatio, Corinthia, expressed his happiness at the reunion. "With great joy, after quite a while, we found ourselves here for the cutting of the vasilopita," he said. Another guest, a former president of the Argolida Association, attended to support the Corinthians despite the dissolution of her own regional group. "I am from Kranidi, Argolida," she said. "I am very happy for you and I have come many times when you gather, even while we have been lost. Good fun to everyone". These stories highlighted the diverse yet unified experience of the diaspora, where regional loyalties from the Peloponnese coalesce into a broader Hellenic pride in Montreal.

The hall was filled with the sounds of well wishes as members sat around tables decorated with white linens. One attendee noted that their entire table hailed from the same village, Stymfalia, Corinthia. "I wish everyone health and love," she said, reflecting the communal warmth that defined the night. Other members shared simple, heartfelt prayers for the future, with one guest stating, "I wish for everyone to have health, peace, and for your association to slowly grow. May you be well and thank you for the evening". Another member added, "I wish for health and for us to always try to be here again next year and always".

The evening also included a raffle where guests won various prizes, adding an element of excitement to the proceedings alongside a sweet table laden with traditional desserts. The event, which took place on Saturday, January 24, at 6:00 p.m. at the Hall of the Arcadian Association at 4391 Saint Martin Boulevard West in Laval. The program concluded with a final message from the organizers, thanking the community for their participation and offering wishes for a prosperous 2026.

Hellenic community returns to historic Holy Trinity Church stone wall to launch anniversary year



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In the heart of the city where a preserved stone wall stands as a silent witness to history, the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal returned to its spiritual birthplace to inaugurate a year of commemorations marking more than a century of continuous presence in Quebec. The gathering at the modern hotel, built directly around the remaining stones of the original Holy Trinity Church, set a deeply emotional tone for an anniversary dedicated to honouring the pioneers who built a flourishing diaspora out of a modest basement. Surrounded by these original stones that once formed the foundation of the Holy Trinity Church and the surviving icon of Agios Nektarios saved from a fire in the 1980s, community leaders reflected on the immense evolution of the organization since its inception. Basile Angelopoulos, president of the community, asked attendees to consider the perspective of the early immigrants who gathered at the first church. “Could they have ever dreamed that that little community that they created, just up the street here on Saint Lawrence at 753 in 1906, with the creation or the establishment of the first church, Neva Gedizmos, where from there, its basement and its premises, they proudly began working to welcome more of their compatriots from Greece, to integrate them into the society, to help them get a job, build a business, build a family, build a life, build a future, and above all, build a community,” Angelopoulos asked the audience.



He emphasized the current scale of the institution, which includes trilingual day schools across five campuses and six Greek Orthodox churches. The organizing committee detailed a vast array of cultural events designed to weave Hellenic heritage into the broader fabric of the city. Justine Frangouli-Argyris, president of the anniversary committee, described a vision of unity and celebration that will engage both the Greek population and the wider public. “It’s going to be like a Zorba dance,” Frangouli-Argyris stated, envisioning a movement extending from Laval to the South Shore. George Tsantrizos, director general, affirmed the organization’s enduring commitment to the early immigrants. “We want to assure them that we have remained faithful to their mission to serve the Greek community of Quebec,” Tsantrizos noted. The press conference concluded with a formal end to the presentations as officials opened the floor to questions from the media.

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