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# Pierrefonds-Roxboro officially proclaims March as Hellenic heritage month to honour diaspora history



photo: Harry Barba



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Two Greek flags stood prominently on a blue-draped table inside the wood-paneled municipal council chambers of Pierrefonds-Roxboro, flanking an open golden guest book meant to record a significant civic milestone. The visual arrangement established an atmosphere of deep reverence for ancestral traditions and language before the start of the regular council session. The gathering forecasted weighty themes of cultural preservation, the strengthening of Hellenic identity abroad, and the profound historical footprint of the Greek diaspora in Canadian society.

During the sitting on March 9, 2026, the municipal council passed a resolution to officially recognize the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal. The official municipal document highlighted the organization's historical and current contributions to the social, cultural, and civic development of the local collectivity. Furthermore, the borough formally proclaimed the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month. The resolution encourages all residents to participate in activities and events that highlight the history, culture, and continuous contributions of the Hellenic community.

The municipal documents provided deep context for the proclamation, noting that Hellenic thought, particularly its advancements in civic life, democratic participation, and collective responsibility, has profoundly influenced contemporary institutions and municipal values. The official agenda highlighted that generations of citizens of Hellenic heritage have remarkably aided the growth of the borough in fields including entrepreneurship, education, healthcare, community action, the arts, and philanthropy. The borough council also noted in its official texts that the Parliament of Canada is currently studying a legislative project to officially recognize March as Hellenic Heritage Month on a national scale.

Borough Mayor Dimitrios Beis welcomed a full room of attendees and online viewers to the meeting. He was joined by city councillors Sophie Mohsen, Louise Leroux, Benoit Langevin, and Chahi Tarakjian, along with the administrative team. Mayor Beis addressed the crowd to explain the cultural importance of the evening, noting that the borough was commemorating Greek Independence Day alongside the milestone anniversary of the Hellenic community. Earlier in the day, Mayor Beis, speaking as a municipal leader of Greek origin, had the privilege of hoisting the Greek flag at the borough hall.

The mayor took time to highlight the specific contributions of three distinguished guests seated in the audience. He first introduced Nikolaos Karalekas, the Consul General of Greece in Montreal. Mayor Beis listed the consul general's extensive diplomatic background, which included serving as an ambassador advisor, deputy chief of mission at the Greek embassy in Stockholm, and diplomatic advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister in Athens. Mayor Beis expressed admiration for his record, noting that reading such a list of professional accomplishments puts everyday achievements into perspective.

The council also recognized several representatives of the local Greek community. Mayor Beis acknowledged these community members for their collective work in fostering civic engagement and maintaining the active educational, cultural, and religious institutions that allow the diaspora to prosper.

Mayor Beis invited the broader population to learn more about the Greek community. He announced that the local municipal libraries had brought out books and documentation illustrating the heritage of Greece. The mayor invited everyone to celebrate the history and the culture, adding humorously that the diaspora brought the amazing culinary traditions of Greece to Canada.

Weaving in a personal narrative, Mayor Beis shared his own family's immigration story to provide a human element to the diaspora experience. He recounted that he was born in Canada, but his father decided to return to Greece when he was very young. Finding that Greece had changed during his absence, his father faced the difficult decision of whether to bring his children back to North America. When Mayor Beis was five years old, his father chose to settle the family in Pierrefonds. The mayor recalled that in 1970, the area consisted mostly of dirt roads and farmland. Reflecting on his current position after five mandates as borough mayor, he expressed deep emotion about raising the Greek flag at City Hall. He stated that if his parents were alive today, they would be immensely proud to see the municipality they chose fifty-five years ago recognizing their heritage in such a public manner.

At the culmination of his address, Mayor Beis requested that Consul General of Greece and representatives from the Greek community come forward to sign the borough's golden guest book to formally document their visit. He then transitioned from speaking the two official languages of the council to speaking in his ancestral Greek language. He explained to the chamber that he pursued these recognitions for the community, for himself, and for his family, ensuring his children understand their origins and their potential. The mayor concluded the official presentation by stating, long live Greece, long live Canada, and long live Montreal.


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**Dimitri Papadopoulos**

## Hellenic Community board hears call to preserve archives of Greek organizations

By Dimitri Papadopoulos

The Board of Directors of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal convened March 3 in the Mikri Vouli chamber at the organization's headquarters on Wilderton Avenue, where the evening's proceedings combined institutional oversight with reflection on the history and future of the Greek presence in Canada. Directors and administrators opened the session with a guest presentation on Greek migration research before turning to financial updates, governance matters and new initiatives linked to the organization's 120th anniversary year. The meeting gathered board members, staff and observers for discussions that ranged from heritage preservation and educational collaboration to operational finances and the modernization of the community's technological infrastructure.

The evening began with the board welcoming Dr. Anastasiades, a scholar involved in the national Immigrec research initiative on the Greek diaspora. Addressing directors, he described the project as an effort to document the historical experience of Greek migration to Canada and to connect academic research with the living memory of the community. The project, which began in 2016, has already conducted 433 interviews with Greek immigrants who arrived between the 1950s and 1970s, generating roughly 600 hours of recorded testimony and a growing digital archive accessible to the public.

Dr. Anastasiades told the board that the initiative has also catalogued Greek Canadian newspapers dating back to the 1960s and documented roughly 10,000 advertisements placed by Greek businesses across the country, as well as mapping about 16,000 historical migration addresses derived from telephone directory records. The project's digital museum, he explained, currently receives about 1,000 visits per month from roughly 500 individual users. "The most important element is the young people involved," he said, explaining that students working with the program include third generation Greek Canadians as well as newcomers and non Greek participants who are learning about the community and its history. "These are the people who will continue the work of preserving this history." He also described a request directed to community organizations to help identify archival materials held by Greek associations. In many cases, he noted, historical records are lost when organizations dissolve or when the last officers pass away. Digitization efforts can preserve these materials while returning the originals to their owners. The presentation provided cultural context for a meeting otherwise focused heavily on operational matters. Directors proceeded through reports from various secretariats outlining activities connected to the HCGM's 120th anniversary year. Among recent events was the February 8 luncheon titled "Our Roots, Our Journey," which brought together members of Montreal's earliest Greek families for a reflection on the beginnings of organized Hellenic life in the city. According to the executive vice president's report, the event formed part of a broader commemorative program recognizing the organization's legacy and the role of institutions such as schools, churches and cultural organizations in maintaining Greek language and identity in Quebec.

Financial matters formed the central portion of the board's deliberations. The finance committee reported that the organization continues to await a response from the Bank of Montreal regarding documentation submitted as part of the ongoing restructuring of HCGM debt obligations. The bank has confirmed that all requested material has been received and is under review while the finance team prepares updated cash flow projections extending two additional years.

The treasurer's report also provided operational details on recent activities. The anniversary luncheon at Hotel 10 generated $12,200 in revenue including donations and incurred $11,600 in operating costs, resulting in a modest surplus of $600. The finance committee also reported in kind contributions, including 24 bottles of olive oil donated for the event by Messara Foods Inc. valued at approximately $400.

Looking ahead, the community's youth programming continues with the Youth Wave Party scheduled for Feb. 28 at Embassy Plaza in Laval. Organizers projected sales of 400 tickets at $35 each, for potential revenue of $14,000, alongside $8,000 in sponsorship commitments. Estimated operating costs of $14,000 would produce a projected surplus of approximately $8,000 once all revenues are confirmed.

Directors also approved a resolution authorizing the signing of a service level agreement with the company Findjoo to implement a membership management portal. The agreement establishes service commitments including a target monthly uptime of 99.9 per cent for the platform's containerized applications and databases, as part of the HCGM's broader effort to modernize member services and digital infrastructure.

Administrative reports also noted recent staffing additions within the community's head office operations and ongoing work to strengthen communications and membership engagement, including the hiring of a content creator and social media manager as well as a project coordinator within the membership department.

The meeting concluded after questions from board members, community participants and media representatives, with the next regular session of the Board of Directors scheduled for April 14, 2026.


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# Hellenic foundation honors 16 scholars



photo: Harry Barba



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Beneath the ornate ceilings and glowing chandeliers of the McGill University Faculty Club, a profound sense of cultural pride filled the room as the community gathered to celebrate the pursuit of knowledge and the enduring vitality of the Greek language. The thirty-seventh annual awards ceremony of the Hellenic Scholarships Foundation honored 16 university students, intertwining the ancient Greek ideal of excellence with a modern commitment to preserving Hellenic heritage through higher education. The event on February 27, 2026, brought together academic leaders, dignitaries, and families to recognize the achievements of the diaspora youth, underscoring the critical role of civic engagement in maintaining cultural identity abroad.

Officials sat at a long table draped in burgundy cloth on a raised platform, overlooking an audience deeply invested in the intellectual future of the community. The Hellenic Scholarships Foundation was established in 1987 by university academics of Hellenic origin together with the student associations of McGill and Concordia Universities to encourage students attending institutions of higher learning in the province of Quebec. Recognizing that educational support is a vital tool for preserving regional Greek culture for future generations, the organization aims to inspire a healthy academic drive and create role models who will carry forward the values of their ancestors.

The foundation operates on the core philosophy of “aristeia”, the ancient Greek concept of excellence. Professor George Demopoulos, a member of the academic committee, explained that the selection process was highly rigorous, reflecting the high standards of the Greek-Canadian student body. He stated that "whatever the Greeks have done, they have tried to do it in the best way," adding that they always strive "to reach excellence" and that the event was a true celebration of that pursuit. The committee received 35 applications for the 16 available scholarships, resulting in a 45 percent success rate. Demopoulos noted that "it was very difficult work, because almost all the candidacies were of equal merit," forcing the committee to apply their criteria quite strictly with excellence as the fundamental baseline.

Doctor Evangelia Lila Amirali co-hosted the evening alongside Professor Eva Kehayia, stepping in for her husband, foundation president Doctor John Hadjinicolaou, who was unable to attend. Reading his prepared remarks from the official event program, Amirali shared the extensive history of the organization and its ongoing mission. She relayed his message stating that "for the thirty-seventh consecutive year, the Hellenic Scholarships Foundation devotes this special evening to the university students of the Hellenic community of Quebec". The statement further emphasized that the community must "celebrate those who will hopefully be the successful pioneers of the scientific, academic and professional world of tomorrow," serving as "able representatives, leaders and ambassadors of the Hellenic heritage". Including this year, the foundation has awarded 297 scholarships to 133 men and 164 women, representing a total of 504,100 dollars distributed over the decades.

The impact of the foundation extends deeply into the personal lives of the community, as evidenced by conversations held during the gathering. Eleni Drakopoulou, a retired teacher, expressed her immense pride in seeing children she once taught now standing as university scholars. She stated that she attends the ceremony every year because she has "the great joy and emotion to see my old students being awarded". Drakopoulou added that "the joy and pride I feel for these children is indescribable," noting that educators truly feel these students are their own children. Antonia Macris, a committee member who received a scholarship in 2020, spoke about her motivation to give back to the organization. Macris mentioned that "it is a great honor" to return, explaining that seeing what the foundation gave her and other students made her want to continue to give back and do more each year for the new candidates.

The ceremony prominently featured the personal experiences of past recipients who have since built successful careers. Katerina Lagopati, who received a certificate of academic excellence from the foundation in 1998 for her graduate studies in music performance, delivered a moving keynote address. Lagopati described her return to the podium 28 years later as a deeply emotional experience. She recalled that receiving the award "was a validation, a public acknowledgement, a realization of my effort, my efforts and my hard work". She urged the new recipients to "remember your roots," stating that "Hellenism laid essential foundations for Western civilization, creating a cosmopolitan, interconnected world". She reminded the audience of the ancient maxim inscribed at Delphi to know thyself, calling self-awareness the foundation of true wisdom.

Before the formal distribution of the awards, the proceedings paused for a musical interlude that further highlighted the cultural richness of the evening. Pianist Janette Wolff took to the grand piano to play an adagio by Marcello transcribed by Johann Sebastian Bach, a waltz by Frederic Chopin, and a prelude by Sergei Rachmaninoff.

Following the musical presentation, the foundation officially awarded the scholarships to the meritorious graduates. The 16 recipients represented a wide array of academic disciplines across universities in the province of Quebec. The students recognized included scholars specializing in occupational therapy, psychology, pediatrics, mechanical engineering, and history. Polychronia Aretakis, a graduate student in music at McGill University, received an award sponsored by the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal for her passion for Greek musical traditions. Anthony Georgaros, studying history and classics, was recognized for his research into the historical movement of the Kollyvades and his active involvement in Byzantine music. Peter Nikoletopoulos, a second-year medical student at McGill University, received the Doctor Peter Varvarikos Scholarship and was recognized for his leadership of an exploratory medical team comprising 50 volunteer assistants. These diverse fields of study reflect the multifaceted ways in which the diaspora youth are contributing to both Canadian society and the preservation of Greek cultural heritage.

The financial and emotional support provided by these awards has left lasting impressions on previous recipients, as documented in the organization's records. Georgia-Maria Kalogirou, a previous scholarship recipient from McGill University, stated that the award contributed significantly to covering her tuition fees as an international graduate student, relieving her from a great amount of stress. Kalogirou emphasized that the foundation made her feel like part of a huge and valuable network, making her feel that she is "part of another family" despite being so many kilometers away from home. Vasiliki Rahimzadeh, who received the Pink in the City scholarship, shared that the financial support enabled her to publish her thesis work on pediatric cancer and present at an international clinical conference. Rahimzadeh noted that she gained lifelong friendships and expanded her network of mentors who share her commitment to promoting Hellenism in spheres of higher education.

Community leaders emphasized the reciprocal relationship between the scholars and the society that supports them, urging the youth to remain engaged with their roots. Basile Angelopoulos, the president of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, addressed the students directly with a message of civic responsibility. He expressed the immense pride felt by the entire community, telling the students that "you are our children," "you are our future," and "you are our hope". Angelopoulos referenced the Athenian leader Pericles, who believed that citizens must serve the public good. He told the students that they "have an obligation of service to the community," explaining that "community is me, community is you, community is all of us together". He instructed the scholars to "have it always in your mind that this community will always need you" and that they will have, sooner or later, the feeling that it is time to give back.

Various organizations sponsored specific awards, demonstrating a broad network of support across different professional sectors. Doctor Marietta Varvarikos, president of the Hellenic Medical Association of Quebec, presented three scholarships to medical students. She assured the recipients that the medical association exists to be a pillar of support for them throughout their careers. Varvarikos also honored the legacy of past presidents, including Doctor Peter Varvarikos, describing them as essential role models who led with a deep love for the youth. Member of the National Assembly for Chomedey-Laval Sona Lakhoyan Olivier and Member of Parliament Annie Koutrakis also attended the event to present an award, praising the new generation and the exceptional quality of the students recognized.

Amidst the celebration of academic triumph, the gathering observed a moment of deep solemnity to honor lives lost and demonstrate solidarity with the homeland. Kyriaki Speri, a reporter covering the event, addressed the room and requested a minute of silence. The audience stood in quiet reflection for the 57 victims, many of them university students, who died in the Tempi train crash in Greece on the same date in previous years.

After the final expressions of gratitude to the academic committee, volunteers, and media were delivered by the hosts, the formal proceedings concluded. The evening then moved directly into a reception, allowing students, families, and organizers to gather and converse.


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# Montreal AHEPA family celebrates 25th annual Saint Valentine's ball for pediatric care



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Red ambient lighting bathed the grand ballroom of the Embassy Plaza reception hall in Laval as members of the Greek diaspora gathered to celebrate a philanthropic tradition. The melody of a white grand piano and the music of a live showband filled the space, setting an elegant backdrop for a night deeply rooted in Hellenic heritage and civic duty. The annual Saint Valentine's ball, organized by the Montreal Family of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, brought together community leaders, generations of families, and philhellenes to strengthen cultural bonds and advance a major medical fundraising campaign for pediatric care in the province.

Preserving Greek culture abroad relies on the continuous engagement of the community through shared celebrations and a collective commitment to public service. The gathering served as a testament to this enduring civic pride, as guests from across Canada and the United States reunited to honour their shared ancestry. The formal evening highlights the organization's ongoing mission to foster education and community welfare, ensuring that the foundational values of the Hellenic identity are passed down to future generations.

The active participation of international representatives, including Anastasios Moussas, the national president for Canada, underscored the widespread dedication to maintaining these cultural pillars. Guests shared personal stories of their families arriving in Canada and building new lives, emphasizing how the event provides a vital space to speak the Greek language and celebrate their customs together. These shared narratives reinforce the importance of maintaining an active, charitable presence within the wider Canadian society.

Central to the evening's purpose was the ongoing support for the Sainte-Justine university hospital centre foundation. Co-chairpersons Zambetoula Drakontaidis and James Hutchison addressed the attendees, outlining the critical need to fund the pediatric neuromodulation program. "Dear friends, this year marks the Montreal AHEPA family's 25th annual Saint Valentine's ball," the organizers stated in their joint address. "We count on your kind contribution and generous donation to help this worthy cause ." The campaign specifically targets the acquisition of transcranial magnetic stimulation technology, a non-surgical treatment utilizing magnetic currents to regulate brain functions and reduce seizures in children suffering from drug-resistant epilepsy. The medical program also maps brain functions to determine differences between neurotypical children and those with neurodevelopmental disabilities, which assists medical professionals in establishing precision-care medicine.

The festivities featured a performance by the Sophistoccasion showband, whose members, dressed in matching white tuxedos, entertained the guests from the stage. A ceremonial cutting of a large, rectangular white cake adorned with a silver 25 and a red ribbon motif, donated by Ambrosia Bakery, marked the historical milestone of the ball. The spirit of generosity that defines the local Greek community was evident throughout the hall, reflecting on a legacy that has consistently raised funds to help sick children.

The formal proceedings culminated on the stage with the presentation of a large commemorative cheque. Event organizers gathered to unveil the final fundraising total for the current medical campaign. The Montreal AHEPA Family presented $45,000 to the hospital foundation, bringing their total contribution for the magnetic stimulation technology to $139,000 over the past two years.

The Montreal AHEPA family presented $45,000 to the hospital foundation, bringing their total contribution for the magnetic stimulation technology to $139,000 over the past two years. Since its inception 25 years ago, the annual ball has raised more than $1.2 million for various local medical and educational institutions, including the Montreal Children's Hospital, the Shriners Hospitals for Children and the Socrates school.

# NDG council adopts declaration honouring 120th anniversary of the Hellenic community



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The austere municipal council room of the Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grace borough hall provided the setting for a formal acknowledgment of the historical roots of the Greek diaspora in Montreal. The gathering focused on cultural longevity, the early waves of immigration that shaped the city, and a civic commitment to honouring the institutions that have sustained the community for over a century. During the regular sitting of the borough council on March 9, 2026, the local government moved to formally highlight the deep historical presence of the diaspora within the municipality. Acting Borough Mayor Sonny Moroz introduced a formal declaration to commemorate the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal. The official municipal document notes that the presence of the Greek community in Quebec, and specifically within the borough, dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The text further explains that immigration accelerated from the 1950s onward, establishing Montreal as the primary destination for Greek immigrants arriving in the province.

The municipal resolution relies on recent census data to underscore the current demographic footprint of the community. The document states that according to the 2021 Statistics Canada census, nearly forty per cent of the population of Greek origin in the entire province resides within the Montreal territory. This figure represents nearly twenty-seven thousand residents who have contributed to the economic, social, cultural, and artistic development of both the city and the borough. A central focus of the declaration is the physical presence of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal within the borough limits. The official text highlights that the organization's headquarters are located on Wilderton Avenue in the district of Côte-des-Neiges. The resolution acknowledges that this organization has served the Greek population of the metropolis since 1906, offering various activities to preserve and promote the language. The document further details that the organization encompasses a vast complex, including a school, an episcopal palace, a community centre, and the Saint George Greek Orthodox Cathedral. The resolution notes that the construction of the cathedral was completed in the late 1950s during a period marked by the significant expansion of the community following the Second World War.

Acting Mayor Moroz, who is currently managing the council sessions while Borough Mayor Stéphanie Valenzuela is on maternity leave, addressed the assembly regarding the declaration. He utilized his time to reflect on the impact of the diaspora, stating that after one hundred and twenty years of being in Montreal, it is time to do more for the Greek community with statues and commemorations. Moroz expressed confidence in the future, predicting that a new generation of community members will get involved, following in the footsteps of previous Greek elected officials who served their residents diligently. He formally thanked the community for their efforts to instill good values in the next generation, which makes society better. The declaration also ties the organizational anniversary to broader historical events, noting that March 25, 1821, marks the beginning of the insurrection of the Greeks to free themselves from the Ottoman Empire. The text recognizes that the local community celebrates this day annually with a parade through the streets of Montreal on the first Sunday following the date. The formal recommendation adopted by the council asks the borough to recognize the importance of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal in gathering and preserving the culture.

Following the acting mayor's introduction, Émilie Brière, the municipal councillor representing the district of Côte-des-Neiges, addressed the chamber. She emphasized the localized nature of the organization within her district. Brière stated she was very happy to have the opportunity to discover the cultural richness of the communities that are part of the territory of her district. She expressed her intent to move forward with members of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal so that this richness is celebrated. Brière added that she was very happy to be the elected representative who welcomes their implementation in the district of Côte-des-Neiges, officially joining her voice to celebrate the anniversary. The motion, presented by Acting Mayor Moroz, was formally supported by Councillor Milany Thiagarajah before being adopted by the council. The legislative endorsement marked the conclusion of the discussion on the item before the municipal session proceeded with the remainder of the evening's agenda.

# Greek heritage takes centre stage at Arcadians' annual dance



photo: Harry Barba



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The sound of traditional Greek music filled the vast ballroom of Palace Reception Halls in Laval as hundreds of members of Montreal's Greek community gathered beneath hanging lanterns and warm lights to celebrate a tradition that has endured across generations. Dancers in embroidered costumes formed long lines across the floor, hands linked in the timeless rhythm of Greek folk dances, while families watched with pride. The evening marked the 65th annual dance of the Arcadians of Montreal, a civic and cultural gathering that reflected the enduring presence of Greek language, heritage and identity within the diaspora.

The event commemorated sixty five years since the founding of the Pan-Arcadian Brotherhood of Canada, an association created by immigrants from the mountainous region of Arcadia in the Peloponnese who settled in Montreal and sought to preserve their traditions in their new homeland. From its earliest days the organization has served as a meeting point for generations of Arcadians and their families, promoting Greek culture through dance, language and community initiatives.

Guests filled the hall early in the evening as a live orchestra from Greece performed traditional melodies that carried the spirit of the homeland to the Canadian stage. The program included a formal dinner, speeches from community leaders and a series of dance performances by youth and adult groups. Throughout the evening the dance floor remained the focal point of the celebration as children and young adults performed regional dances in traditional costumes representing the villages of Arcadia.

The presence of young dancers was a defining element of the evening. Rows of children and teenagers took the floor in coordinated performances that drew applause from the audience and reflected the association's long commitment to teaching traditional dance to the next generation. According to organizers, more than one hundred and forty young dancers participate in the program.

Addressing the gathering from the podium, organizers emphasized the historical roots of the association and the legacy of the immigrants who established it decades ago. Speakers recalled that the first Arcadians who arrived in Canada left their villages and families behind but carried with them the traditions and values of their homeland.

"Today we celebrate sixty five years of the Arcadian association, sixty five years of unity and dedication to preserving our cultural heritage," the master of ceremonies told the audience during the opening remarks. "The Arcadians who arrived in Canada left behind villages, families and memories, but they never left behind their soul."

The president of the association, Zissis Fotopoulos, welcomed guests in both Greek and English and spoke about the responsibility of transmitting culture to younger generations. He reminded attendees that the future of the community rests with the youth who took part in the performances that evening.

"Today we celebrate the vision and the love of the first Arcadians who came to this country and kept alive our language, traditions and values through sacrifice and hard work," Fotopoulos said. "Our responsibility is to continue this work and pass it on to the new generation you saw tonight, so they will carry our roots with pride."

During the evening the association also honoured former presidents who guided the organization through earlier decades of activity. Their contributions were acknowledged before the assembled audience as representatives of the current leadership expressed appreciation for the volunteer work that sustained the association since its founding. The recognition underscored the continuity of leadership within the organization and the role played by successive generations in maintaining its cultural mission.

The event drew a wide range of community representatives and public officials, including Greece's ambassador to Canada, members of Parliament and municipal representatives from Laval. Many of them spoke of the importance of cultural organizations in sustaining Greek heritage within the diaspora.

Greek Ambassador Katerina Dimaki praised the vitality of the community and the participation of young dancers. "It is a wonderful celebration," she said in remarks after the performances. "I was impressed by the dance groups. People of all ages danced with enthusiasm and energy, and it shows how the culture is passed to children and grandchildren."

She also referred to the historic role of Arcadia in the Greek War of Independence and encouraged members of the diaspora to continue preserving the traditions of their region. During her speech she noted that the region remains closely tied to Greece's national history and identity.

Federal Member of Parliament Emmanuella Lambropoulos attended the celebration and spoke about the cultural ties that continue to unite Greek Canadians with their ancestral homeland. Lambropoulos, who has family roots in Arcadia, noted that she regularly participates in the association's events and described the annual dance as a vibrant expression of community life.

"It is a wonderful event," she said during an interview at the gathering. "There are so many people here, so much joy, and all the children danced. It is beautiful to see the community come together and remember where we come from."

Representatives of Montreal's Greek institutions also addressed the audience. The president of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal described the evening as a sign of continuity for Greek heritage in Canada.

"What we saw tonight shows that thanks to the Arcadians, Hellenism in Canada has a bright future," he said. "When the association was founded sixty five years ago, no one could have imagined that today such a hall would be filled with young people dancing our traditions."

Many attendees described the celebration as both a cultural gathering and a family reunion. Several generations were present in the hall, including immigrants who helped establish the association and children who are now learning the same dances their grandparents once performed.

Executive vice-president Giannis Thodosopoulos reflected on the personal significance of the association for members of the diaspora. Speaking during an interview at the event, he recalled returning to his village in Arcadia and feeling a deep connection to the land where he grew up.

"When I go back to Arcadia and my village, I kiss the soil where I walked as a child," he said. "These are our roots. Tonight we see a large Arcadian family from many villages united here in Montreal."

He added that the participation of children in the dance program represents the future of the organization. "Only if we rely on these children will the Arcadians continue for another sixty five years," he said.

Municipal representatives also noted the importance of community associations in strengthening cultural ties across the city. Laval councillor Vasilis Karidogiannis described the gathering as a demonstration of collective pride.

"Sixty five years is a whole lifetime," he said. "You see a proud and dynamic association, with hundreds of young dancers and families filling the hall."

The association operates cultural and educational activities throughout the year, including dance classes that begin each September and welcome participants of all ages. Fotopoulos said the organization currently operates without its own building and continues its activities through the support of volunteers and community members.

"At the moment we rent our space and cover the expenses so the association can continue," he said during the interview. "Everyone is welcome to participate. If you are Greek and you want to take part, our doors are open."

Former president Maria Michopoulos, who served the organization for decades, attended the celebration and expressed satisfaction that the association's work continues. "The image says everything," she said while looking across the crowded hall. "You see so many people and so many children. The work of the previous generations continues."

The evening continued late into the night as the orchestra from Greece performed traditional songs and guests joined the dance floor alongside the youth groups. Families formed circles that extended across the hall while musicians played clarinet, violin and bouzouki.

The 65th annual Arcadian dance took place March 7 at Palace Reception Halls in Laval, with traditional dance performances by youth and adult groups and music performed live by an orchestra invited from Greece.

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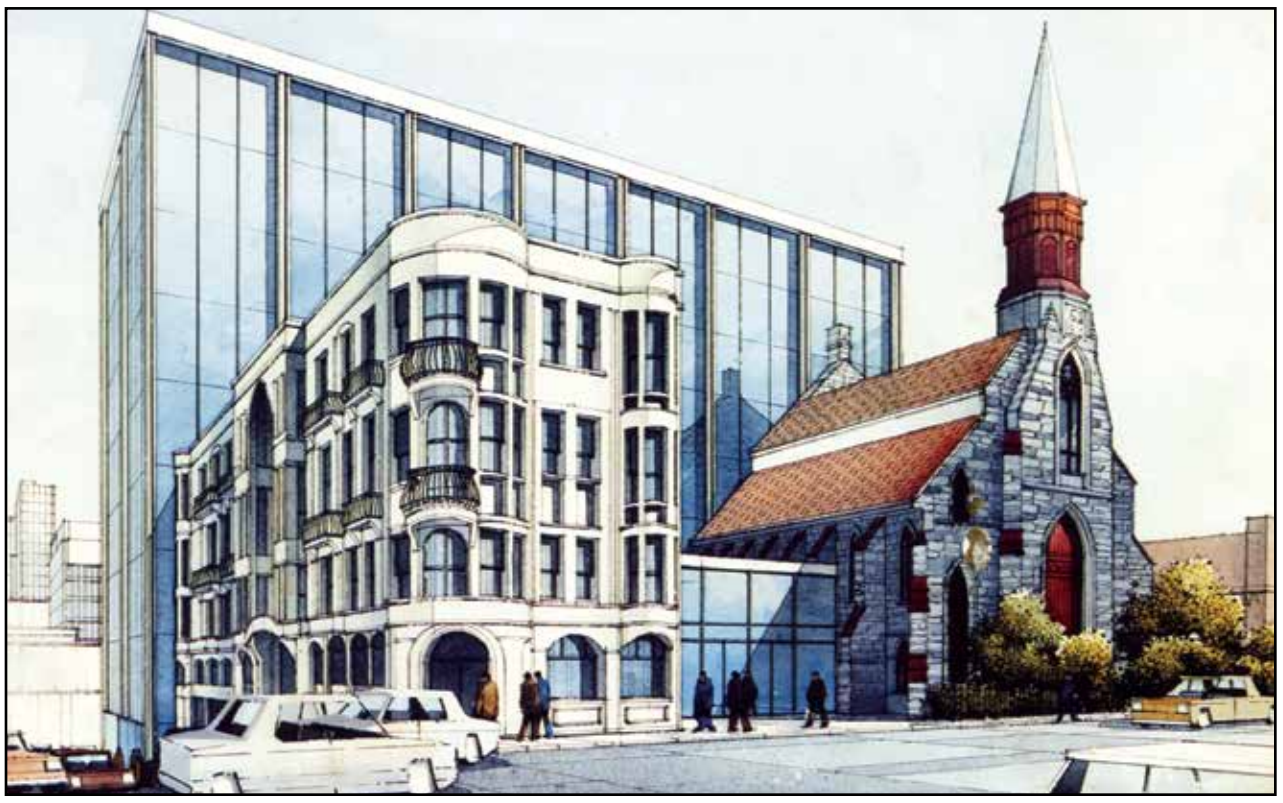


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Montréal

# Holy Trinity and the ghost of a promised Parthenon



by Dimitri Papadopoulos
with files from John Cocconas

In the previous edition of The Montreal Greek Times, we explored the historic six-decade chronicle of Holy Trinity, a church that constituted the primary space of strategy and development for local Hellenism. For the early generations of Greek immigrants who arrived with unwavering faith and deep cultural pride, this sacred property was the foundation upon which the community had deposited many hopes for the future. Today, exactly 40 years after the devastating flames consumed that sacred space, we continue this ongoing tribute by examining the turbulent events that unfolded after the fire. Archival photographs from that era show a majestic stone facade swallowed by a relentless blaze, juxtaposed against later, highly ambitious architectural renderings that promised a sprawling modern complex. The ensuing narrative of Holy Trinity reveals a complex history where community devotion intersected with political ambition.

For the older generation of Greeks in Montreal, the original building held an immeasurable emotional weight. It was within those stone walls that countless newly arrived Greek immigrants sought solace, gathering to hear the Divine Liturgy in their native tongue and to celebrate their earliest Greek-Canadian Christmases. The church bore witness to their most sacred life events. It served as the holy site where young couples exchanged wedding vows, where proud parents baptized their children, and where families worked tirelessly to preserve their rich Hellenic heritage. It was a vital institution functioning to ensure that the rich Hellenic identity was passed down unbroken. To understand the depth of this loss for the younger generation of Greek-Canadians, one must recognize that this church functioned as the pulsing heart of community unity and cultural survival in a new world. Today, standing at the corner of Sherbrooke Street and St. Laurent Boulevard, observers see the modern facade of Hotel 10 occupying the exact location where this historic church once stood. The hotel serves as a highly visible reminder of a promised rebuilding effort that failed to materialize.

The interest of the Greek community in the restoration of the destroyed church was immediate and immense. A fundraising committee was swiftly formed under the leadership of Father Konstantinos Chalkias to begin the vital work of gathering resources. Various community fundraising events were organized and executed with the singular goal of collecting money to resurrect the sanctuary, and the response from the Greek community was deeply touching. Families contributed generously, driven by a profound patriotism and a steadfast desire to see their spiritual home restored. The community administration, functioning under the leadership of Adrian Maris, was simultaneously facing a severe financial deadlock. This economic strain stemmed from the creation of a second community centre located on the South Shore of Montreal. The contract for that specific suburban project had been signed with the company Saming Constructions on July 8, 1985, exactly six months prior to the fire that claimed Holy Trinity. The administration proceeded to ignore the immediate goals of Father Chalkias and his dedicated committee, advancing instead toward the creation of plans for massive, grand visions.

These impressive actions orchestrated by Adrian Maris fascinated a large segment of Hellenism, and many individuals accepted the grand proposals with noticeable enthusiasm. The president's prior success in establishing the two community centres served as a strong foundation of trust for his supporters. The vast gap that had opened between the community administration and the Bishopric at the time was fuelled by Maris's broader plan for the union of the remaining peripheral communities. Among the fervent supporters of the administration were highly politicized leftist groups, operating entirely under the protective title of "progressive forces". These specific factions stood as the catalytic forces during the all-night general assemblies, driving major decisions forward with the organized strength of 70 reliable votes. The conservative world of the community expressed intense opposition to the grand visions of Adrian Maris and tried numerous times to obstruct this organized tactic, ultimately failing to halt the administration's momentum. Adrian Maris was known to be uncompromising, stubborn, imposing, and remarkably combative in defending his positions, representing a symbol of assurance to all those who passionately backed his dreams.

Under these heavily politicized conditions, "the simple and easy restoration of Holy Trinity becomes yet another unattainable dream" for Adrian Maris. The president left everyone completely speechless when he officially released the plans for the creation of what was dubbed the "Parthenon". Even the most vocal sceptics were deeply impressed by the sheer scale of the venture upon seeing the spectacular architectural model published widely in local newspapers and community calendars. On July 8, 1987, the architect Dan S. Hanganu was called upon to ratify the binding decisions of the plenary session that had been taken earlier on May 6, 1987. The official contract, signed by President Adrian N. Maris and architect Dan S. Hanganu, provided for an extensive architectural study costing $450,000. This massive fee was attached to a proposed project estimated to cost approximately $16,000,000, a staggering sum for a community operating without the necessary capital. The comprehensive plans included the restoration of the Godin building situated at the southwest corner of Sherbrooke and St. Laurent, as well as the restoration of the church itself. The grand vision further required the construction of a massive eight-storey building rising above the Sherbrooke street level, complete with a basement floor and three full levels of underground garage space. A defining feature of the design was the construction of a glassed-in atrium intended to seamlessly connect the Godin building, the historic church, and the new structure.

The pursuit of these grandiose plans stood in stark opposition to the efforts of Father Konstantinos Chalkias and his committee. The priest had received vastly different promises regarding the immediate restoration of the church directly following the fire. Finding himself completely unsupported by his own superior authority, the Bishop, the devoted priest was eventually forced to abandon his community in Canada. He relocated and settled permanently in the United States, receiving necessary help and moral support from the Archdiocese of America. Leaving Montreal deeply disappointed, Father Chalkias made sure to declare loudly to anyone who would listen that the insurance policy for Holy Trinity was explicitly written for "Replacement Cost". The internal communal chaos was further aggravated by the notorious "Daperis case". This incident revolved around a formal decision to expel community member and radio broadcaster John Daperis. The expulsion was a direct retaliation for an article he had written and published in his newspaper "Hellenic Voice" eight months earlier. In the piece, Daperis publicly called upon the Bishop "to take up his responsibilities". The provocative headline of the article read: "[Bishop], YOUR TIME HAS COME". The official justification provided for the harsh community decision was that the published article "undermined the foundations" of the community.

The July 8, 1987 contract stipulated that from the total architectural fee amount of $450,000, the Hellenic Community of Montreal was presently making an immediate commitment for $93,000 for the preparation of the survey plans and sketches. The final agreement was officially accepted in Montreal, Quebec, on the ninth day of July, 1987.

In the upcoming edition of The Montreal Greek Times, our ongoing investigation will continue by examining the specific details surrounding the insurance of Holy Trinity. We will present the official estimates provided by the state and the specialized professors of the University of Montreal regarding the true costs of the sanctuary's restoration.

COMMUNAUTE HELLENIQUE DE MONTREAL
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΣ ΜΟΝΤΡΕΑΛ

1987, July 8

Mr. Dan S. Hanganu,
Architect
404 Saint-Dizier
Montréal H2V 3T3

Re: Place Sainte-Trinité
2-6-8 Sherbrooke ouest, Montréal

Dear Mr. Hanganu,

We are referring you to our various conversations with respect to the above project and in this connection, we wish to confirm the agreement we reached as follows:

1.- You shall be the Architects for the above captioned project.

2.- The project will include:

2.01) the restoration of the GODIN building, situated at the South West corner of Sherbrooke and St.Laurent,

2.02) the restoration of Église Sainte-Trinité

2.03) the construction of an eight-storey (8) building, above the Sherbrooke street level, with basement floor and three (3) levels of garage space underneath,

2.04) the construction of a glassed-in atrium, which will connect the Goding building, the Église Sainte-Trinité and the new structure and will have access to Sherbrooke, St.Laurent and Clark streets.

3.- Your total fees, if the project goes ahead, shall be $ 450,000 irrespective of the total cost of the project, which is estimated to cost approximately $ 16,000,000.

4.- From the amount of $ 450,000 we are presently making an immediate commitment for $ 93,000 for:

4.01) the preparation of the survey plans for the Godin building and Église Sainte-Trinité, as they now exist,

4.02) the preparation of sketches which will be submitted to the Ville de Montréal, S I M P A and the Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec, showing the basic concept of the project,

...2

Mr. Dan Hanganu page 2
1987, July 8

4.03) the preparation of the Preliminary Plans of the project.

5.- The amount of $ 93,000 for the work described above, shall be paid to you as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5.01) as a retainer | $ 9,300 | |
| 5.02) on completion and presentation of the sketches | $ 13,950 | |
| 5.03) at half point of the Preliminary Plans | $ 27,900 | |
| 5.04) and after the completion of the Preliminary Plans, the balance of | $ 41,850 | $ 93,000 |

The balance of the $ 357,000 shall be paid to you after the approval from our Community's General Meeting and as per schedule of payments agreed upon by both of us, at a later date.

6.- We have made an application to the Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec for the Classification of our Église Sainte Trinité and Édifice Godin as historical monuments, and we expect to receive a grant from the Quebec government, in excess of $ 1,800,000.

7.- Your fees include the following work:

7.01) the preparation of all architectural plans for the PLACE SAINTE TRINITÉ Project,
7.02) the supervision of the construction of the said project,
7.03) the coordination of the planning and execution of the project with the structural, electrical and mechanical engineers,
7.04) to undertake and to carry out all the work which is required with the various services of the Quebec government, the Ville de Montréal and S I M P A.

8.- We shall pay for the printing of copies of the architectural plans, the structural, electrical, mechanical engineering and interior planning and design fees.

9.- We attach to this letter an Extract of the Minutes of a Special General Meeting of the Members of our Community, held on 1987, May 26, which indicates what other extra fees you may receive and that we have not received yet the approval of the Community's General Meeting, to go ahead with the whole project. Therefore, we cannot sign, at this stage, any agreement with you, although we undertake to sign the standard form of agreement of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, as soon as we have the approval of said Community's General Meeting, always subject to the terms and conditions of this letter.

10.-We enclose herewith the Building Program that we anticipate, has to be incorporated into our plans. It is understood however that there will be certain adjustments, depending on the negotiations which we

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Mr. Dan Hanganu page 3
1987, July 8

are having with the Quebec government and the Ville de Montréal.

11.- We would like to reiterate that although you are making a commitment as per terms and conditions herein to be the architects of this project, after we get the go-ahead from our Community's General Meeting, for the total amount of $ 450,000 our obligation to you is only the amount of $ 93,000, as referred in clause 5 herein.

Kindly sign the enclosed extra copy of this letter, thus indicating your acceptance of the foregoing.

Sincerely,

COMMUNAUTÉ HELLÉNIQUE DE MONTRÉAL

Adrian N. Maris
President

ACCEPTED in Montreal, Quebec
this ninth (9) day of July, 1987

Dan Hanganu
Architect

Should major changes in the program of this project occur, the architectural fees shall be adjusted accordingly.


ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΨΥΧΗ

LA VOIX HELLENIQUE DU CANADA – HELLENIC VOICE OF CANADA

Θεοφιλέστατε, Επίσκοπε Τορόντο Κύριε Σωτήριε,

ΗΡΘΕ Η ΩΡΑ ΣΟΥ

ΔΙΑΒΡΩΣΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΩΝ

ΑΠΟΠΡΟΣΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΣΜΟΙ

Η ΤΑΡΑΧΟΠΟΙΟΣ ΔΙΟΙΚΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΟΣ ΜΟΝΤΡΕΑΛ

ΑΣΕΒΕΙΕΣ

ΤΟ ΑΔΙΕΞΟΔΟ

# Lack of gynecological access highlights gaps in Quebec women's healthcare



Dimitri PAPADOPOULOS
editor@greektimes.ca

The deep reverence for family and the matriarchs who anchor the household remains a cornerstone of the Hellenic diaspora in Montreal. Within this cultural framework, the physical well-being of women from youth through their golden years commands profound respect and attention, serving as the bedrock for preserving the Greek language and heritage across generations. This vital aspect of family life recently echoed through the legislative chambers in Quebec City, where a concentrated political effort has emerged to address the biological realities of women. The ensuing debate highlights a significant legislative push to establish comprehensive healthcare frameworks for hormonal health, the political challenges encountered on the parliamentary floor, and the ongoing endeavor to draft binding legislation.

Standing in the red chamber of the National Assembly, wearing a dark blazer, a patterned blouse, and her signature glasses, the Member of National Assembly for Chomedey, Sona Lakhoyan Olivier, addressed her colleagues to introduce a formal motion. The legislative proposal asked the assembly to recognize that hormonal realities linked notably to menstruation and menopause can lead to important impacts on the physical health, mental health, and quality of life of women. The politician asked the provincial government to begin work on establishing a national policy on women's health. She read from her official press release that women represent half of the population, and yet their hormonal health remains a blind spot in public policy. Following the provincial elections of 2022, 58 women were elected to the legislature, representing 46.4 per cent of all members. By 2025, women occupy 41 per cent of the positions in the Council of Ministers.

Publications like The Montreal Greek Times play a critical role in preserving regional Greek culture for future generations, organizing community initiatives, and strengthening Hellenic identity abroad through civic awareness. The health of the women in the community is intrinsically tied to this mission, as grandmothers and mothers are often the primary transmitters of the Greek language, Orthodox traditions, and cultural heritage. During an exclusive interview, the MNA emphasized the importance of bringing this dialogue directly to cultural communities. She noted that "the Greek media and community media are interviewing me", hoping this grassroots awareness will reach the ears of the government. She reflected on how previous generations rarely spoke openly about these issues. The elected official observed that "our mothers and grandmothers never talked about menopause, never, ever talked about postpartum depression after giving birth". Within the Greek-Canadian community, where elders are deeply integrated into daily family life and childcare, ensuring that women age in good health is highly relevant.

Within the various community organizations and local church groups, the topic remains hushed. The politician shared that women in these associations "never dare talk about it" openly, instead opting to "whisper



to each other" about experiencing hot flashes, treating the subject "as if it's shameful". She is actively working to dismantle this stigma, declaring that "we do have a unique system, women", and should be comfortable discussing biological realities. The Member of National Assembly noted that women are living longer and "they can continue to profit the community, the families". She pointed out that if they are healthy and their hormonal transitions are properly managed without severe side effects from aging, "they can stay longer" in the workforce and "continue working". Furthermore, they can be "helpful to the family", especially providing care for "the grandchildren". However, the current medical approach often falls short of meeting these needs. She argued that young girls are frequently given pain medication for severe cramps while being told their suffering is a standard biological experience. She stated that "since puberty, starting puberty, when we say to girls that, oh, it's normal, it's okay, and they're in pain, you know, I find that there hasn't been enough studies". She mentioned knowing a young woman who "doesn't have a doctor" and "she's on Advil nonstop" since the age of 17.

To address this, the proposed strategy involves increased investments in research within Quebec universities and hospitals to provide doctors with better tools and clear guidelines on hormone replacement therapies. The MNA also brought up a systemic hurdle, mentioning that general practitioners "never send you to a gynecologist" unless there is a severe medical issue. She firmly believes that "each woman should have the right to a gynecologist, to go see a gynecologist" to receive specialized care.

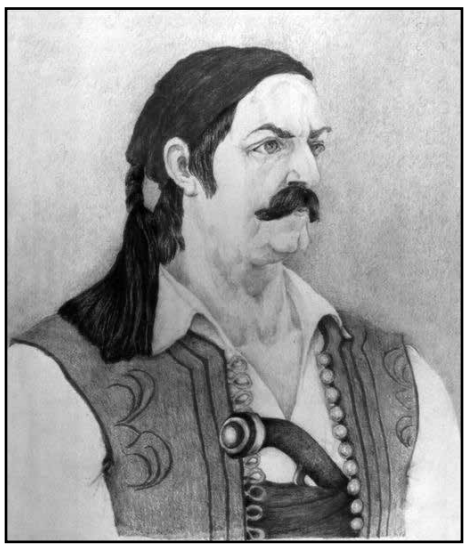
To amplify her message to the broader public, the elected official held a press activity on the morning of February 26 in the Bernard Lalonde room at the Parliament building. Standing at a wooden podium flanked by several blue and white Fleurdelisé flags, she addressed the media to explain the urgent need for medical research and preventive care. She reminded those in attendance that International Women's Day "was born out of a struggle", with the first day taking place in 1911 before being recognized by the United Nations in 1975. She challenged the status quo by asking "what have we actually done for women's health", considering Quebec made the choice to have "a universal health system for our entire population". She stated that "from the very first time the girls have their period, young girls learn to endure pain". She added that "there is little prevention, no structure to follow-up and no long-term data".

Speaking personally during the press conference, she shared her own lived experiences to underscore the gravity of the situation. She spoke as a menopausal woman, describing menopause as a "major hormonal transition that affects the heart, the bones, mental health, memory, healthy aging, and essential aspects of life" that people often take for granted until they begin to disappear. She explained that "with age, hormones decrease progressively", leaving many women with "reduced hormonal protection exposed to significant impacts on their health and quality of life". She credited a 2021 documentary led by Veronique Cloutier for finally breaking the silence on the issue. That media mobilization led the Minister of Health, Christian Dube, to announce the coverage of two bio-identical hormones by the Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec. While acknowledging this as an important step, she stressed the need for a comprehensive public policy, noting that isolated measures are insufficient to address a widespread health crisis. She believes the province has the necessary expertise, stating "the science exists, the institutions exist", and "what's missing is political will".

Despite the unprecedented number of female elected officials in the legislature, the Coalition Avenir Quebec government voted against the motion without providing an explanation on the floor. When the governing party refuses a motion without notice, the proposal drops and cannot proceed to a full vote. The politician expressed feeling hurt and disappointed by the refusal, noting she was sure they were going to accept it given the numerous female ministers in the government. She speculated that the refusal might be tied to the government facing a 12 billion dollar deficit and cutting budgets across the board. She countered this by explaining that simply passing the motion "would have sent a great message" to researchers, encouraging them to focus on menopause research. She emphasized that elected female officials must lead this charge, asking rhetorically "are we going to wait for Celine Dion to come and replace us" to advocate for women. She pointed out that the federal Minister of Health recently announced an investment of 1.9 million dollars for perimenopause and menopause research, showing that the movement is already gaining traction. She had previously brought this subject to the Liberal Party over the past three and a half years during their meetings, and they "were ready to do something about the menopause".

Refusing to let the initiative stall, the Member of National Assembly confirmed she is now using other parliamentary tools to advance the issue. She stated that "I'm working on a project for a law, so a bill". The objective is to present this formal legislation before June, which would force a formal vote and bring the matter before a parliamentary commission. At such a commission, medical specialists, universities, and hospitals could testify and provide official recommendations to the government. During the morning press briefing, journalists repeatedly asked questions regarding the internal politics of the Quebec Liberal Party and the Ethics Commissioner. The MNA is currently sitting as an independent member. She declined to discuss partisan matters, stating she wished to remain focused on the subject of women's health and the upcoming International Women's Day. The press conference officially concluded at 9:16 in the morning.

# Remembering Elias Kormas and his sacrifice at the Battle of Maniaki



For members of the Hellenic community, the legacy of the Greek War of Independence is built upon the courage of local chieftains and military leaders. Among the most revered of these figures is Lieut.-Gen. Elias Kormas. Born in 1780 in the mountainous Messenian village of Kefalinou, Kormas dedicated his life to the liberation of Greece from Ottoman rule, ultimately sacrificing everything for the cause of freedom.

fore the revolution officially began in 1821, Kormas was secretly inducted into the Filiki Eteria, the underground society plotting the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire. He worked closely with other revolutionary figures, including the fiery clergyman Papaflessas, to prepare the Messenian population for an armed uprising. When the war broke out, Kormas led a strong contingent of fighters from the Ithomi region. He dismantled local Ottoman strongholds and forced enemy troops to retreat to coastal fortresses, effectively liberating his native province.

His tactical abilities quickly drew the attention of the broader Greek military leadership. Kormas participated in several major campaigns across the Peloponnese. He fought in the grueling siege of Tripolitsa and played a key role in the pivotal Greek victories at Valtetsi and Piana. His exceptional bravery during the Battle of Dervenakia even led Theodoros Kolokotronis, the commander-in-chief of the Greek forces, to briefly appoint Kormas as his aide-de-camp. Despite this high-ranking staff position, Kormas chose to return to the front lines to lead his fellow Messenians.

The defining moment of his military career, and the ultimate test of his dedication, came during the Battle of Maniaki. On May 20, 1825, Kormas and a small Greek force faced the massive, European-trained Egyptian-Ottoman army led by Ibrahim Pasha. Despite the overwhelming odds, Kormas refused to retreat. He fought relentlessly in the trenches and passed into the pantheon of national heroes alongside his family members and many of his fellow villagers who fought by his side.

To ensure this profound sacrifice is never forgotten, the municipality of Messini now holds a formal memorial service in Kefalinou to honour the lieutenant-general and his men who fell at Maniaki. Following a unanimous decision by the local municipal council, this tribute is held annually on the first Sunday of June. The commemorative event features speeches from history professors and cultural representatives, wreath-laying ceremonies by municipal and regional leaders, and a roll call of the fallen. The local mayor has also stated that the municipal authority will pursue official recognition of this memorial from the Greek state.

D.P.

# Montreal community gathers for a heartfelt Greek Language Day celebration





Stephania PALIMERIS
palimeri.stephania@gmail.com
**Local Journalism Initiative Reporter**

Sunlight streamed across the crowded rows of the Salle Foyer at the Hellenic Community Centre Adrian Maris, illuminating a vibrant gathering of generations united by the resonant sounds of their ancestral tongue. The atmosphere brimmed with a profound sense of cultural continuity, as attendees stood shoulder to shoulder in the overflowing hall to honour the traditions and linguistic heritage that bind the diaspora together. Anchored by this deeply felt communal pride, the gathering highlighted the concerted mission of local cultural, academic, and educational institutions to safeguard the Hellenic identity and ensure the transmission of the Greek language to future generations flourishing abroad.

The celebratory event, held on a Sunday afternoon, marked International Greek Language Day and was jointly organized by the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, the Hellenic Cultural Institute, and the Consulate General of Greece in Montreal. Driven by the official theme of highlighting institutions promoting the Greek language in Montreal, the gathering showcased the multifaceted approaches used to keep regional dialects and standard modern Greek alive within the metropolis. Eirini Tourkomanoli, the co-principal of the Campus II of the Socrates-Demosthenes School who hosted the ceremony, explained that the community collaborates extensively to deliver a bilingual and trilingual reality to its youth. Tourkomanoli noted the immense responsibility falling upon the diaspora to continuously speak, preserve, and project the language as widely as possible following the recent global recognition of the date by the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization.

The formal acknowledgment by international bodies served as a focal point for several dignitaries in attendance. Nikolaos Karalekas, the Consul General of Greece in Montreal, reflected on the historical weight of the language, referencing its forty centuries of oral tradition and thirty-five centuries of written history starting from the Linear B script. Karalekas shared that the official international decree cited the Italian astronomer Galileo, who described the invention of the Greek alphabet as the greatest discovery of humanity. The consul general emphasized that Greek operated as the primary international language of communication across different peoples for six centuries during the Hellenistic period, ultimately enriching other European languages and laying the foundational vocabulary for modern political, scientific, and philosophical discourse.

Basile Angelopoulos, the president of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, connected this sweeping historical narrative to the tangible reality of the diaspora in Quebec. Angelopoulos stated that active participation means a guaranteed future for the Hellenism of Montreal. He shared a poignant story about young students at the Socrates-Demosthenes School who were asked to draw and colour their internal organs based on their feelings. Angelopoulos recounted that the children coloured their brains with a mix of shades to represent their diverse identities as global citizens and Canadians, while they unanimously coloured their hearts a solid, pure Greek blue. He described the language as a living experience brought to life by teachers, priests, and volunteers who teach the youth to stand upright and proud, ensuring that the community remains anchored to its roots.

The importance of speaking the language within the family home was a sentiment echoed by Dr. Jacques Bouchard, a professor emeritus of modern Greek literature at the Université de Montréal and the recipient of the 2025 Grand Prize for Greek Literature from the Ministry of Culture. Bouchard implored the audience to converse in Greek among themselves to save the most important language of Western civilization. He noted that the structure and grammatical system of the language provide a unique foundation for scientific thought, encouraging the younger generations to maintain the linguistic wealth they acquire naturally within their households. Anastasios Anastasiadis, an associate professor and chair of the Phrixos B. Papachristidis at McGill University, added that the survival of the language has historically relied on multilingual environments. Anastasiadis explained that supporting trilingual education and resisting the pressures of a strictly monolingual culture are vital steps in protecting the Hellenic cultural footprint in North America.

Personal testimonies further illustrated the profound emotional and practical value of language retention for young adults in the community. Nikita Giannakis, a graduate of McGill University participating in the minor program for teaching Greek as a second language, shared his experiences applying his academic studies to real-world connections. Giannakis described using the language as a powerful tool to engage with immigrant realities, allowing students to articulate stories about their homes, villages, and families. Reflecting on his own travels to the island of Kefalonia, he explained that conversing with his grandparents generated deep and unforgettable emotions. Giannakis stated that every trip to Greece was truly a lesson in culture and language, and that the local hospitality actively birthed the language within him.

The celebration also spotlighted the diverse array of institutions working to catalogue, teach, and perform the cultural artifacts of the Greek people. Stavroula Theodorakopoulou, a philologist working with the Hellenic Library of Montreal, detailed the ongoing efforts to modernize the library and digitize an extensive collection of archives, rare books, and local diaspora literature to preserve the intellectual output of Greek-Canadians. Konstantina Bakopanou, a dance teacher from the Montreal Folklore Workshop Dimitris Tzotzis, explained how traditional dance and song function as living expressions of identity. Bakopanou highlighted that teaching folk songs in rare regional dialects helps maintain the complete mosaic of the culture. The folkloric group invited the audience to join the youth in a traditional call-and-response Vlach song, transforming the linguistic heritage into a communal physical activity.

Artistic performances and student recognitions formed a significant portion of the afternoon program. A choir of students from the Socrates-Demosthenes School, dressed in their dark blue uniforms, stood before a large map of the Mediterranean and sang the Epitaph of Seikilos. Maestro Dimitris Ilias explained to the audience that the piece is the oldest surviving complete musical composition from ancient Greece, bridging the classical past with the vibrant present. The youth programming continued with the recitation of verses by celebrated Greek authors including Odysseas Elytis, Nikos Kazantzakis, and Constantine Cavafy. Following the artistic segments, the leadership of the community called a group of grade five students to the front of the hall to receive awards for their outstanding written essays focusing on the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal. The students proudly held their prize envelopes while posing for photographs alongside the community executives.

The community gathering incorporated modern technology to engage the attendees in a final reflection on their linguistic roots. The organizers displayed a digital code on the presentation screens and asked the audience to use their mobile devices to submit their favourite Greek word. The words populated live on the screens, creating a visual cloud of cultural values that included love, freedom, harmony, and history. The event concluded with the announcement of the poll results, revealing that the word philotimo emerged as the most popular choice submitted by the attendees.

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# What we celebrate on the 25th of March

by Dimitri Papadopoulos

On the 25th of March each year, Greeks around the world observe the anniversary of the 1821 Revolution, the armed uprising that launched the Greek War of Independence against nearly four centuries of Ottoman rule. For millions of Hellenes and philhellenes, the date carries profound national and cultural significance. For Greek-Canadians, and especially for the younger generation who look forward each year to the grand parade on Jean-Talon Street, it is worth understanding the history behind the celebration.

By the early 19th century, the Greek people had lived under Ottoman occupation since the fall of Constantinople in 1453. For roughly 400 years, Greeks were denied political self-determination, subjected to heavy taxation and forced conscription, and relegated to the status of second-class subjects within the Ottoman Empire. Throughout those centuries, the Greek Orthodox Church played a central role in preserving the Greek language, faith and national identity. Secret schools, known in Greek tradition as "kryfò scholiò," are remembered as places where children learned to read and write Greek in defiance of restrictions imposed by Ottoman authorities.

By the late 1700s and early 1800s, a growing movement for independence had taken root among Greek intellectuals, merchants and military leaders both within Ottoman-held territories and in the Greek diaspora across Europe. A secret revolutionary organization called the Filikì Eterìa, founded in 1814 in Odessa, worked to coordinate an organized revolt. Its members recruited supporters across the Greek world and laid the groundwork for a national uprising.

On the 25th of March 1821, the revolution began. Tradition holds that Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the flag of revolt at the Monastery of Agia Lavra in the Peloponnese, blessing the struggle and calling Greeks to arms. Fighting erupted across the Peloponnese, on the islands of the Aegean and in mainland Greece. Greek revolutionaries won early victories against Ottoman garrisons, and on the first day of January 1822, the First National Assembly at Epidaurus adopted a constitution and formally declared Greek independence.

The war that followed was long and brutal, lasting nearly a decade. Greek fighters endured sieges, massacres and internal divisions. The struggle captured the imagination of people across Europe and North America, giving rise to the philhellenic movement. Volunteers, intellectuals and political figures from Britain, France, the United States and other nations lent their support to the Greek cause. Among them was the English poet Lord Byron, who traveled to Greece and died at Missolonghi in 1824.

International intervention proved decisive. In 1827, the combined naval forces of Britain, France and Russia destroyed the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet at the Battle of Navarino, a turning point that effectively secured Greek independence on the battlefield. Diplomatic negotiations followed, and in 1830 the London Protocol, signed by the three allied powers, formally recognized Greece as a sovereign and independent state.

The Treaty of Constantinople, signed on the 21st of July 1832 between the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire, established the final boundaries of the new Kingdom of Greece and confirmed its full sovereignty.

Here in Montreal, the Greek community marks this anniversary each year on the last weekend of March with a parade along Jean-Talon Street that draws thousands of participants and spectators from across the city. It is one of the largest public expressions of Hellenic identity in Canada.

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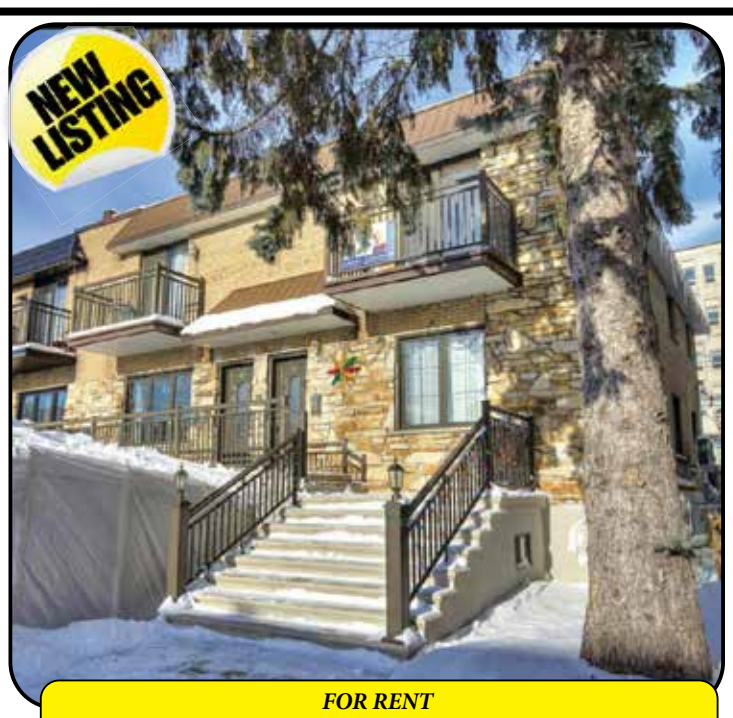
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# Hellenic cultural academy Romiosyni preserves ancient carnival traditions for younger generations in Laval





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**Local Journalism Initiative Reporter**

The steady rhythm of regional folk music and the vibrant colors of traditional costumes filled the Palace reception halls in Laval, Quebec, transforming a winter afternoon into a warm celebration of Hellenic heritage. Guests gathered around elegant banquet tables to witness a revival of ancient customs, surrounded by young dancers breathing life into age old stories of community and renewal. This lively gathering served as a vital bridge to the past, aiming to educate the diaspora about the deep historical roots of the Greek carnival season and the enduring importance of preserving cultural identity and the Greek language abroad.

The Greek carnival, often referred to as the “Apokries” season, represents a three week period of uninhibited festivity that immediately precedes the solemn fifty day fasting period of Orthodox Lent. Rooted in antiquity long before the advent of Christianity, these observances originally functioned as agricultural rites designed to awaken the earth from its winter dormancy and ensure a bountiful spring harvest. Early religious leaders initially viewed the celebrations as idolatry, but the customs were so deeply embedded in the local populations that they were eventually absorbed into the calendar. During this designated window of revelry, participants are granted societal permission to engage in absolute satire, openly mocking everything from everyday hardships to prominent authority figures such as presidents and priests. The tradition relies heavily on symbolic costumes, rhythmic music, and communal dances to literally stomp the ground awake, bringing warmth and life back to the community after the cold months.

Organized by the Hellenic Cultural Academy Romiosyni on February 22, 2026, the civic event focused entirely on the observance of these rich traditions. Performers adorned the dance floor in an array of authentic regional attire, while other participants wore humorous modern outfits, including striped prisoner uniforms, local hockey jerseys, and animal ears to reflect the festive spirit. The expansive hall accommodated generations of families who watched as dancers linked arms to form large, joyous circles across the wooden floor. Dance instructor and master of ceremonies Anthony Beliotis welcomed the attendees and guided the audience through the intricate historical depth of the diverse performances. Beliotis explained that his group used to hold this event annually before the global pandemic, and returning to the venue marked an important milestone for the community. He stressed the gravity of the academy's mission, declaring that the community must maintain its morals and customs.

To illustrate these customs, the youth group presented an elaborate theatrical dance narrating a complex village wedding. The central storyline followed a young woman from the village and a young man who had moved to the city, brought together by an enthusiastic local matchmaker who decided they were a good match. As the vibrant performance unfolded, hidden secrets were revealed to the audience, including prior arrangements, family disagreements, and unexpected relationships that added comedic drama to the presentation. The dancers utilized specific regional music and choreography to convey the narrative, beginning with the lively Yianka dance to engage the crowd, acting as a reminder of the carnivals in Patras and the Ionian islands. The troupe later performed the Pyrgousikos dance, during which the matchmaker character excitedly grabbed the village priest by the beard, drawing laughter from the attendees. They continued with the Gatos from Eastern Thrace, a traditional dance heavily associated with the region stretching toward Constantinople.

The storytelling advanced with the Piperi, a traditional folk song where participants follow lyrical instructions to mimic grinding pepper using different parts of their bodies, including their hands and feet. Another notable segment featured the Base dance from Thrace, an intense routine where men use wooden sticks to keep a steady rhythm at a specific distance from one another. During this specific dance, a symbolic baby is passed mouth to mouth among the performers, and the dancers must ensure the child does not fall to the ground. If a dancer drops the child, the mother character retrieves the baby and playfully beats the performers with a stick. The performers highlighted the narrative tension by executing the Sigano and Pentozali dances from Crete, referencing local lore where a young man warns the village of his actions if he cannot marry his chosen bride. Additional dances represented traditions from Samos, specifically the Avas dance, aiming to awaken nature and ensure a good year.

The young performers fully immersed themselves in the cultural narrative, seamlessly blending historic folklore with theatrical comedy. One of the most popular characters of the afternoon was Mama Melpo, an elderly grandmother who navigated the dance floor using a metal walker, played by a performer named Dimitris. Dimitris committed completely to the persona, altering his appearance to look like an older woman and interacting playfully with the crowd while adjusting his hair curlers. Discussing his approach to the character, Dimitris noted the ambiguity of the role. "We have no confirmed age. We went with a Yaya look and I think I pulled it off pretty well," he said. He explained that his ultimate goal was to portray an authentic character to ensure the audience enjoyed the spectacle. "Just look at me," Dimitris joked. "It is not the hardest thing in the world to do, but really killing your tongue, killing, showing that you are about sixty years older really," Dimitris explained. He added that this commitment is what it means to do a performance, as long as everyone enjoys the presentation. "If I was intense, I was intense," he affirmed.

Evgenia, a vocalist who portrayed the beautiful bride in the performance, reflected on the profound personal impact of participating in the cultural academy. She expressed that singing traditional Greek music makes her feel much more connected to her culture because it represents her core identity. "Personally, it makes me feel much more connected to my culture, because it means what I am," Evgenia shared. She emphasized that such community gatherings are instrumental in keeping the diaspora together and maintaining the cultural fabric of Montreal. "I think I would not be me if I did not do Greek singing, because it is a big part of my life that I think if I did not do it, something would be lost," she stated. She added that engaging with the music helps maintain Hellenic traditions even for those who do not speak the Greek language fluently on a daily basis. "I think it is a good way to keep your culture, to keep your culture, even if you do not speak Greek all the time, not always at church, but at least to do the singing, because it keeps the community, you follow the music," Evgenia concluded.

The ambitious production required extensive preparation and dedication from the young dancers, representing approximately thirty children and eighteen older youth within the academy. Sponsor Peter Strifas commended the rigorous efforts of the youth, recognizing the value they bring to the broader community. "Truly it was very nice. The children tried, it was exciting," Strifas stated following the performance. He highlighted the comedic elements of the show, noting specifically that the grandmother character resonated strongly with the attendees. "Honestly it was something so nice. Especially the grandmother was very, very nice. We all laughed, I think," Strifas remarked. Civic support from twenty local sponsors provides the organization with the means to secure necessary traditional costumes and continue offering these vital educational experiences to the community. Supporters included the Palace, Casablanca, the Corinthian Association, the Messinian Association, and the Tsoroidis family. As the two hour cultural presentation concluded, Beliotis thanked the parents and grandparents, stating that without them the children would not be there. The dancers then left the floor to prepare for a meal. Following the final act of the theatrical wedding, the venue opened a large pasta buffet and sweet table for all attendees, alongside a raffle featuring large gifts and door prizes. Event organizers proceeded to play music in the reception hall for guests who wished to remain and dance the rest of the afternoon.

# Η διαχρονία του Ελληνισμού εκτός Συνόρων



Χαράλαμπος ΚΑΤΣΙΒΑΡΔΑΣ
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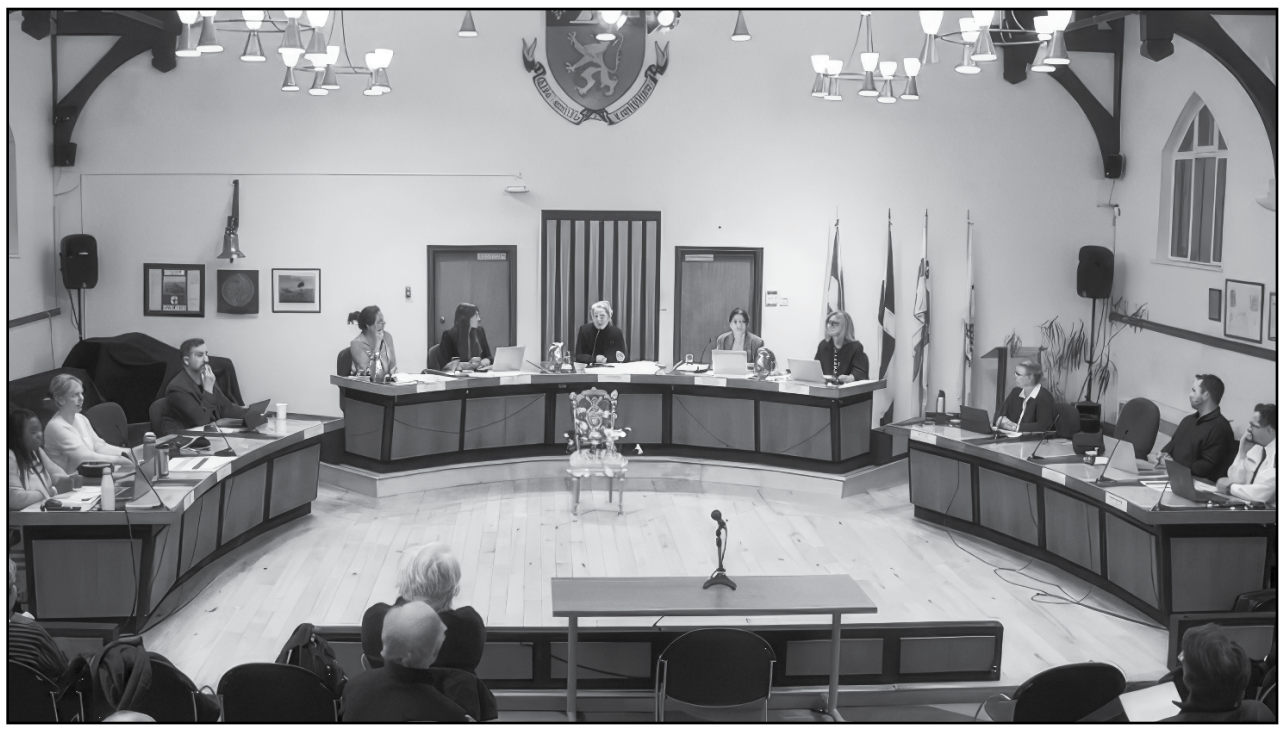
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Χαράλαμπος Β Κατσιβαρδάς
Δικηγόρος Παρ' Αρείω Πάγω και Στ.Ε
Ανεξάρτητος Βουλευτής

# Outremont borough council unanimously supports federal legislation to establish national Hellenic heritage month



Dimitri PAPADOPOULOS
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The brightly lit council chamber of the Outremont borough hall, featuring a curved wooden dais and a prominent municipal crest mounted high on the wall, provided a dignified setting for a night dedicated to democratic participation and cultural recognition. The atmosphere during the evening session forecasted weighty themes of historical resilience, the enduring legacy of ancient philosophical traditions, and a concerted legislative push to formally enshrine the contributions of the Greek diaspora within the national calendar.

During the regular sitting of the Outremont borough council on March 10, 2026, local elected officials took a definitive stance on cultural preservation. City councillor Georgia Haloulos, representing the district of Claude-Ryan, officially introduced a motion of support for federal legislation that seeks to designate March as Hellenic Heritage Month across the entirety of Canada. Speaking to the chamber in French, Councillor Haloulos stated that the local government wanted to propose an important motion to formally recognize the month of March as the Hellenic heritage month.

Borough Mayor Caroline Braun read the extensive details of the resolution into the public record to provide context for the local assembly. The official text noted that the population of Greek origin represents approximately four per cent of the total population of Outremont. The document also highlighted the ongoing celebrations marking the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal. Mayor Braun articulated that this milestone marks more than a century of continuous presence, deep resilience, and significant cultural and economic contributions to the city.

The municipal resolution explicitly throws the weight of the borough behind Senate Bill S-220. This federal legislation, formally titled An Act to designate the month of March as Hellenic Heritage Month, was introduced in the Upper Chamber of the Parliament of Canada on May 28, 2025, by Senator Tony Loffreda. The parliamentary effort to secure this national designation has deep roots, originating from the persistent work of Member of Parliament Annie Koutrakis. She first tabled similar legislation in the House of Commons in March 2021 with the vision of elevating provincial recognitions into a nationwide celebration of the community. After navigating various procedural hurdles and parliamentary dissolutions, the strategy shifted to the Senate, resulting in a bipartisan collaboration where Senator Loffreda sponsored the current bill with full support from Senator Leo Housakos.

Mayor Braun continued reading the federal bill's preamble to the local assembly, officially reciting that more than two hundred and sixty thousand Canadians are of Greek descent and that numerous vibrant communities exist across the country. The municipal mayor stated that these individuals have brought a precious and lasting contribution to the political, economic, scientific, legal, medical, cultural, and social fabric of Canada. The legislative text further recognized that the very origins of Canadian democracy trace back directly to the ancient Greek city-state of Athens. During the Senate debates on the bill, Senator Housakos reminded the chamber that the word democracy derives from "Demokratia", meaning power to the people, and described how citizens in the ancient Agora debated and held their leaders to account.

The municipal reading also emphasized the deep spiritual and historical significance of the chosen month. Mayor Braun recited that on March 25, 1821, coinciding with the Feast of the Annunciation, Greece commenced its war of independence from the Ottoman Empire. This pivotal date served as the prelude to the creation of the modern state of Greece. The history of this struggle has frequently been invoked by national advocates to illustrate the character of the diaspora. Senator Housakos has previously spoken passionately about the four hundred years of Ottoman occupation, describing how priests and teachers risked their lives in church basements to preserve the language and faith. He also drew historical parallels to the Second World War, specifically referencing October 28, 1940, when the population responded to the ultimatum from fascist Italy with a single word of refusal. These historical touchstones provide the context for understanding the immense resilience that early immigrants eventually brought to North America when they established institutions such as the first Greek Orthodox Church in Montreal in 1906.

By endorsing the federal bill, the Outremont borough council acknowledged the broader mission of diaspora organizations to strengthen cultural identity and promote civic engagement abroad. The approved motion states that celebrating a dedicated heritage month will continue to encourage Canadians of Greek origin to promote their traditions and share them with their fellow citizens. After Mayor Braun concluded the reading of the motion, Councillor Haloulos officially seconded the proposal. The council members, including Bo Choko, Amélie Cliche, and Mercedes Plante, then offered their unanimous support, with each councillor verbally voting in favour of the measure.

The legislative endorsement marked the final item on the agenda before the municipal session was adjourned and the mayor wished everyone a beautiful end to the evening.

# Warm greetings to Greeks everywhere on the anniversary of the Greek Revolution of 1821, a defining moment that gave rise to the modern Greek state.

GROUPE ALIMENTAIRE
MIRON



"Better one hour of freedom than forty years of slavery and prison."
— Rigas Feraios

ΖΗΤΩ
Η 25Η ΜΑΡΤΙΟΥ 1821