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Montreal celebrates Greek independence



photo: Harry Barba/HCGM



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A steady rhythm of drums echoed along Jean-Talon Street as a sea of blue and white moved through Park-Extension, where children in traditional foustanella marched beside elders waving Greek flags and families gathered shoulder to shoulder along the sidewalks. The atmosphere carried both celebration and remembrance, as Montreal's Greek community marked Greek Independence Day on March 29, 2026, with a parade that reflected history, identity and continuity, while also highlighting the enduring role of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal in shaping civic and cultural life across generations.

The annual parade transformed the neighbourhood into a vivid expression of Hellenic heritage. Greek, Canadian and Quebec flags lined the route, reinforcing the dual cultural presence that defines the Greek diaspora in Montreal. This year's event held particular significance as it coincided with the 120th anniversary of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, adding historical weight to a commemoration rooted in the memory of Greece's War of Independence, which began on March 25, 1821.

From the outset, the procession reflected a strong intergenerational presence. Students from Greek schools marched in organized formations, many dressed in traditional attire, carrying banners that referenced both historical milestones and community institutions. Young children held Greek flags with visible pride, while older participants accompanied them, creating a visual continuity between generations that has defined the event for decades.

The gathering conveyed a strong sense of unity and belonging among participants. Families described the experience as one of collective presence, where generations came together in a shared cultural space shaped by memory and continuity. Many spoke of a deep attachment to their heritage and a responsibility to transmit language, faith and traditions to younger generations growing up in Montreal.

The presence of public officials at the municipal, provincial and federal levels underscored the civic recognition of the Greek community's contribution to Montreal. Montreal Mayor Soraya Martinez Ferrada served as one of the grand marshals, joined by Greece's Deputy Prime Minister Kostis Hatzidakis, reflecting the strong ties between Greece and Canada and the significance of the occasion for both the local community and the broader diplomatic relationship.

The Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, founded in 1906, remains central to the organization and continuity of the event. Its role extends beyond ceremonial gatherings, encompassing education, religious life, social services and cultural programming that sustain Greek language and identity across generations. The 120th anniversary marked this year has been integrated into a broader calendar of commemorative activities designed to highlight the community's institutional legacy and its contribution to Quebec society.

Throughout the parade, there was a clear sense of pride in both heritage and civic belonging. Community members expressed appreciation for the recognition given to their presence within Montreal, while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining cultural institutions that support identity over time. The Greek community continues to be regarded as a dynamic and established part of the city's social fabric.

The historical significance of the parade remained central to the day's events. Organizers and participants alike emphasized the importance of the 1821 revolution against Ottoman rule, a defining moment in modern Greek history that continues to shape the identity of the diaspora. The parade serves as a public expression of that memory, reinforcing the importance of language, tradition and historical awareness among younger generations.

Cultural associations, dance groups and community organizations contributed to the procession, presenting traditional music and choreography that reflect regional Greek customs. These performances added depth to the event, linking contemporary celebration with longstanding cultural practices.

The scale of participation further illustrated the significance of the celebration. Thousands of participants took part in the parade, with several thousand spectators lining the route, creating a shared public space where cultural identity and civic presence intersected.

The 2026 parade formed part of a broader series of commemorative events organized throughout late March, including official ceremonies, cultural gatherings and institutional recognitions that marked both the national anniversary of Greek independence and the 120-year presence of the Hellenic Community in Montreal.

The parade proceeded along Jean-Talon Street in Park-Extension and concluded with a reception and performances by traditional dance groups organized under the auspices of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal.


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Το αλλοτριομορφοδίαιτον πρόσωπο της Ευήθειας εν τω συγχρόνω βίω



Χαράλαμπος ΚΑΤΣΙΒΑΡΔΑΣ
hariskatsivardas@yahoo.gr

«Η πολιτική, με τη στενή της έννοια, δεν μ'απασχόλησε ποτέ σαν σκοπός ζωής. Αργότερα, όταν μπήκα στο υπουργείο και βρέθηκα εξαρτημένος από την πολιτική, πάλι δεν μου πέρασε από το νου πως θα μπορούσα να γίνω ποτέ, σαν πολίτης, περισσότερο από ένας τίμιος οπαδός και, σαν υπηρέτης του κράτους, περισσότερο από ένας ικανός βοηθός. Είχα άλλα ενδιαφέροντα, που τα τοποθετούσα ψηλότερα από τις πρόσκαιρες αυτές ασχολίες και που ήταν η ζωή μου»

Γιώργος Σεφέρης

Α. Οι προδότες ως κλειδούχοι της κερκόπορτας

Είναι πρόδηλον λοιπόν ότι η εσχάτη προδοσία, συνιστά μία μορφή, ηθικά επιλήψιμης πράξεως, η οποία ερείδεται, σαφώς, εις την αιφνίδια πρόκληση ενός ιδιαζόντως επαχθούς αποτελέσματος, κατά κανόνα προκλήσεως εκτεταμένης ηθικής βλάβης, κυρίως προς την ομάδα εις την οποία ανήκει οργανικά ή προέρχεται.

Το βδελυρό και αποτροπιαστικό του προδότου, δοσίλογου, καταδότη, Ιούδα, σύγχρονου εφιάλτη, έγκειται εις την παραπλάνηση των συντρόφων του, δια απατηλών μέσων και ο σφετερισμός της άγνοιάς τους προκειμένου να τους προξενήσει δολίως και εν γνώσει του κακό, καίτοι αποτελεί και αυτός οστούν εκ των οστέων και σαρξ εκ της σαρκός τους, εξ ού και καθίσταται απεχθής, αξιοκατάκριτη και ηθικά αξιόμεμπτη η ιδιοτελής αυτή πράξη του εις βάρος του συνόλου.

Ο καταδότης, προκρίνει αμιγώς, πλην κρυφίως και ακονιτί, το προσωπικό του όφελος, πατών επί πτωμάτων, μην υπολογίζοντας τις δυσμενείς, πάσης φύσεως συνέπειες, τις οποίες προξενεί αιτιωδώς προς τους, μέχρι πρότινος συνεργάτες του, ηδονιζόμενος να τους πλήξει άνευ αιδούς.

Πρόκειται ουσιαστικά δια έναν αμοραλιστή, αήθη χαρακτήρα με κτηνώδη χαρακτηριστικά, άνευ ευαισθησιών, ανθρωπισμού, αλλά κατά τεκμήριο δια μία διατεταραγμένη προσωπικότητα, βρίθουσα συμπλεγμάτων τα οποία ανακουφίζει και υπεραναπληρώνει, δια την πρόκληση κακού προς τρίτους.

Ο καινοφανής αυτός Ιούδας, είναι ικανός, δια τριάκοντα αργυρίων, να προδώσει το παν, αρκεί να νιώσει ο ίδιος ότι καθίσταται επικεφαλής, καίτοι ενδομύχως γνωρίζει τα κραυγαλέα υπερεκχειλίζοντα ελλείμματά του, ακριβώς επειδή δεν έχει αξία, αλλά εις όλως τουναντίον, πυροδοτείται η χαμηλότατη αυτοεκτίμηση την οποία έχει, από στιγμιαία εξουσία την οποία λαμβάνει, έστω και προσωρινά.

Ο σύγχρονος εφιάλτης, καθίστανται και οι κλειδούχοι της κερκόπορτας διότι πρόκειται δια έμμισθα ακροβολισμένα ανυπόληπτα έμμισθα φερέφωνα, δρώντα ως κύμβαλα αλαλάζοντα ενός παντάπασι διεφθαρμένου και καθόλα εκμαυλισμένου συστήματος εξουσίας, επί του οποίου γίνονται γηθοσύνως και ασμένως άβουλα γρανάζιά τους, μην ενδοιάζοντας ουδ' κατ' ελάχιστον να προδώσουν πάσα ηθική αξία, να κηλιδώσουν πάσα ψυχή, δίκην της εξυπηρετήσεως του ιδικούς του συμφέροντος και μόνο, άνευ ιδεολογίας, απλώς αυτό-αναγορεύονται σε διαπρύσιους κήρυκες αφηγημάτων, τα οποία ηχούν ευχάριστα προς ευήκοα ώτα.



Πρόκειται δηλαδή δια αλλοτριωμένα, ανυπόληπτα, άχρηστα και απαξιωμένα, άνευ προσόντων ανθρωπάκια τα οποία επιδεικνύουν ιταμότητα, μοχθηρότητα και φιλαργυρία.

Περαιτέρω, οι προδότες ουσιαστικά πάσχουν από ναρκισσιστική διαταραχή αποθεώσεως του καθημαγμένου εγώ τους, είναι καθόλα ευήθεις και χαμηλής διανοητικής εμβελείας, εξ ού και εμπίπτουν από κοινωνιολογική άποψη ανυπερθέτως και πανηγυρικά εις τους ορισμούς των βλακών όπως διαχρονικά έχουν πολλαχώς και παντοιοτρόπως μελετηθεί.

Β. Η διαλεκτική σχέση βλακός και προδότου-δοσιλόγου- εφιάλτου

« Η βλακεία είναι ή κατά το μάλλον ή ήττον εντελής ατονία των πνευματικών δυνάμεων, εξ ής ουδεμίαν δύναται να συλλάβη έννοιαν ο πάσχων. Συνήθως είναι οργανικόν νόσημα, δύναται όμως να προκύψει και εκ βιαίας διαταράξεώς του όλου οργανισμού ή εκ βαθυτάτου γήρως. Δεν έχει δε διαλείμματα.

Μάταιον είναι να βασανίσωμεν το ορθόν των διακρίσεων τούτων υπό την έποψιν της φρενολογικής παθολογίας αρκεί ημίν τούτο, ότι ο δικαστής, άμε πεισθή, τη βοηθεία των ειδημόνων, ότι το λογικό τινός προσώπου πάσχει σπουδαίαν διατάραξιν ή μεγάλην ατονίαν, εξ' ών αδυνατεί να διοικήσει τα ίδια συμφέροντα, δύναται και οφείλει μάλιστα, κηρύττον αυτόν εις κατάστασιν απαγορεύσεως, να διορίση αυτώ προστάτην και αντιπρόσωπον προς διοίκησιν των συμφερόντων του» (Παπαρηγόπουλος, Αστικόν Δίκαιον, ΙΙΙ, 1869, σελ 476-477»

Ούτως ή άλλως οι επιστημονικοί ορισμοί περί της ακατανίκητης ευήθειας των προδοτών καθίσταται διαχρονικώς καταγεγραμμένη δια επιστημονικών αδιασείστων τεκμηρίων.

«Η βλακεία είναι το αποτέλεσμα της παρεμποδίσεως της πνευματικής αναπτύξεως, ήτις ως αιτίαν έχει είτε την εκ γενετής ενυπάρχουσαν έλλειψιν εν τη αρχή του βίου, επελθούσαν βλάβην αυτού, εξ' ού διακρίνεται εν τη ψυχιατρική από των ανωτέρω εν στενωτέρα εννοία καλουμένων ψυχικών νόσων, εν αίς η βλάβη του εγκεφάλου επέρχεται μετά την ανάπτυξιν αυτού. Εκδηλούται δ' εν τη ανικανότητι του πάσχοντος προς πάσαν διανοητικήν εν γένει λειτουργίαν, ήτοι προς σύλληψιν ιδεών και μόρφωσιν εννοιών και κρίσεων (Ηλιοπούλου, Σύστημα του Ελληνικού Ποινικού Δικαίου, Ι, 1919 σ. 191-192).»

Περαιτέρω :

«Βλέπουμε λοιπόν και εδώ ότι η βλακεία σπανίως νόσος, συχνότερα είναι φυσική κατάσταση ορισμένων ατόμων. Οι περιπτώσεις βεβαίως της δεύτερης κατηγορίας είναι σημαντικά δυσχερέστερες διά την επιστημονική ανάλυση, αλλά και, αλλοίμονο, οι περισσότερες όπως επίσης και οι απείρως πλουσιότερες σε κοινωνικά αποτελέσματα.

Ο βλάξ υπό αυτή την έννοια μοιάζει με ζώο αλλά και τον πρωτόγονο άνθρωπο, επειδή έχει ειδική αδυναμία ως προς τον σχηματισμό αφηρημένων εννοιών – είναι δε γνωστό ότι όσο περισσότερο πολιτισμένος είναι ο άνθρωπος τόσο περισσότερο σκέπτεται αφηρημένες έννοιες (θαυμάσια ανάλυση δίδει ο Oswald Spengler στο περίφημο έργον του Der Untergangdes Abendlandes, αλλά και ο Levy-Bruhl αλλά τόσο περισσότερο ανόθευτο και ασφαλές είναι αντιθέτως το ένστικτό του, μετά όλες τις διανοητικές συνέπειες που μπορεί να έχει όλο αυτό, που διαρκώς παραβλέπεται από την παλαιά ψυχολογία, όπως θα δούμε πιο κάτω. Θα ήταν αστείο άλλωστε να εθεωρείτο ως «νόσος» η φυσική αυτή διανοητική και ψυχολογική κατάσταση του βλακός, την οποία έχει ως κοινό χαρακτηριστικό με τον πρωτόγονο άνθρωπο (για περισσότερα βλ. Levy-Bruhl, Lamentaliteprimitive).

Γ. Η παραδειγματική δικαστική και ιστορική τιμωρία των δοσιλόγων, σύγχρονων εφιαλτών

Η πανηγυρική τιμωρία εις βάρος των κοινών συκοφαντών, και σύγχρονων προδοτών, θα απαγγελθεί πλησίστιοι μετά γεωμετρικής ακριβείας, λίαν συντόμως, αφενός με τον ηθικό κόλαφο, εκ θέου λόγω της ανυπερβλήτου εξισώσεως «Ύβρις-Άτις-Νέμεσις και Τίσις,»και εξ ετέρου δια της ποινικής καταδίκης εκ των καθ' ύλην αρμοδίων δικαιοδοτικών οργάνων

Ενταυτώ και ωσαύτως οίων είωθε γίγνεσθαι εις τουςκραδαίνοντεςτην αναπεπταμένηρομφαία τηςδικαιοσύνηςνα διώκουν απηνώςκαι, διηνεκώςτους ιταμούςσυκοφάντες, όσον ένεστι, ενπαντί και πάντοτε, πάλαι τεκαι επ'εσχάτων άχρι εσχάτων.

Αναμένουμε, τηςτύχητου Ιούδα, κατ' αναλογίαν, ειςτουςκοινωνικούςσύγχρονουςεφιάλτες, οι οποίοι ενδύονται τηνδοράτου Λεωνίδος,-οκαιρόςγαρεγγύς, προςτην ανάδυσητηςδιαλαμψάσης αληθείας, δοθέντος ότι ακολούθως, μετά τηνΣταύρωση ακολουθεί αφεύκτωςηεκκωφαντική Ανάστασιςκαι οι θορυβώδεις ικετευτικέςοιμωγέςτωνσυκοφαντών- δοσιλόγων, θα ακουσθούν, κατά την αιώνια και ανέκκλητονκάθοδό τουςπροςτον ΆΔΗκαι τηνκοινωνική ανυποληψία επ' άπειρον και εις το διηνεκές.

Η ελευθερία ουδαμώς και μηδόλως εξαγοράζεται έναντι ουδενός αργυρίου διότι καθίσταται συνυφασμένη με την ανόθευτη ελευθερία του ανθρωπίνου προσώπου.

Αναμένοντας την Ανάσταση.

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

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Montreal proclaims March as Hellenic Heritage Month amid landmark civic tribute



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The chamber of Montreal's City Hall municipal council carried a sense of ceremony during its March 23 session, where the cadence of formal proceedings gave way to applause, national colours and the visible presence of Greek flags in the gallery. Elected officials rose one after another to acknowledge a community whose imprint spans generations, marking both the 120th anniversary of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal and the official designation of March as Hellenic Heritage Month, a recognition rooted in history, identity and civic contribution.

The declaration, introduced during the council's agenda under item 15.07, situates the Greek presence in Montreal within a broader civic narrative that spans more than a century. Municipal records emphasize that generations of residents of Greek origin have contributed across fields including entrepreneurship, education, health care, arts and public life. The motion, supported unanimously, calls for the city to highlight these contributions while inviting all Montrealers to take part in celebrations tied to Greek Independence Day on March 25 and the anniversary year of the community's institutional presence.

In the council chamber, the atmosphere reflected that continuity. Representatives acknowledged individuals seated in the gallery, including long-standing community figures and organizers involved in anniversary events. The presence of elders alongside younger attendees underscored the intergenerational nature of the Greek experience in Montreal, where language, faith and tradition are maintained through institutions that have evolved alongside the city itself.

Borough Mayor Dimitrios "Jim" Beis, who introduced the declaration, framed the moment as one of collective memory and civic belonging. "This evening, we gather in this chamber to celebrate two milestones, Greek Independence Day and 120 years of Greek presence in our great metropolis," he said during the session. He recalled the historical significance of March 25, 1821, noting that the struggle for independence was rooted in dignity, identity and the right to shape one's own destiny, themes that continue to resonate within diaspora communities.

Beis connected that legacy to the immigrant experience in Montreal, describing how successive generations arrived with limited means and built institutions that preserved Hellenic culture while integrating into Canadian society. "They opened businesses, built churches, created schools and organizations that preserved our language, our faith and our traditions," he said, emphasizing that the community ensured Hellenism would flourish rather than simply endure. His remarks reflected a narrative familiar within Greek Montreal, where the early decades of settlement in neighbourhoods such as Park Extension laid the groundwork for a lasting cultural footprint.

City councillor Effie Giannou, who seconded the motion, placed the declaration within the lived reality of Montreal's neighbourhoods. She described the Greek community as an integral part of the Montreal fabric for more than a century, noting that tens of thousands of residents of Greek origin continue to contribute to the city's vitality. Schools, churches and community organizations were cited as pillars that sustain both cultural continuity and civic participation.

Giannou also highlighted the symbolic dimension of the recognition. "We are very proud, here together at city council, to officially recognize March as Hellenic Heritage Month," she said, adding that the designation affirms both historical memory and ongoing engagement within Montreal's diverse society. The annual Greek Independence Day parade along Jean-Talon Street, scheduled for March 29, was referenced as a focal point for public celebration, drawing thousands each year in a display of heritage and community pride.

In remarks that drew attention to the neighbourhood of Park Extension, a city councillor emphasized the longstanding Greek presence in the area, describing it as a defining element of its economic and social identity. The commercial vitality of Jean-Talon Street, often referred to as the city's Greek district, was cited alongside institutions such as Orthodox churches and longstanding businesses that anchor community life. This presence has shaped the neighbourhood and continues to shape it today, with local entrepreneurship and cultural expression maintaining a visible and enduring identity.

Community organizations were also acknowledged for their social impact, including those providing services to families, seniors and vulnerable populations. These institutions, many of which operate in Greek while serving broader communities, illustrate how heritage preservation and social integration intersect in practical ways across Montreal.

Mayor Soraya Martinez Ferrada addressed the chamber with remarks that situated the Greek community within the broader mosaic of Montreal's cultural life. Drawing on her experience in districts with significant Greek populations, she noted the importance of educational and cultural institutions in sustaining identity across generations. "Communities across Montreal take their place in the city, and one way they do so is through schools and cultural activities that allow future generations to continue what defines them," she said. She added that the coexistence of multiple identities within Montreal contributes to the city's character, with Greek Montrealers embodying that dynamic through their dual attachment to heritage and civic life.

The recognition of March as Hellenic Heritage Month aligns with broader efforts at the federal level to establish similar recognition across Canada. In Montreal, where the Greek presence dates back to the early twentieth century, the anniversary year provides a focal point for both reflection and public engagement.

Beyond the council chamber, the declaration coincides with a series of events organized throughout March, including cultural programming, educational activities and commemorations tied to Greek Independence Day. The annual parade remains the most visible expression of these celebrations, bringing together community groups, schools and organizations in a procession that reflects both heritage and civic pride.

The narrative of Greek Montreal, as articulated during the council session, is one of continuity shaped by adaptation. Early immigrants established institutions that preserved language and faith, while subsequent generations expanded that legacy into professional, cultural and political spheres. The result is a community that remains deeply rooted while actively participating in the city's evolution.

The council concluded its proceedings with the adoption of the resolution, formally designating March as Hellenic Heritage Month and inviting residents of all origins to participate in the commemorations marking Greek Independence Day and the 120th anniversary of the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal.

SENATE SÉNAT

CANADA



Senator Leo Housakos wishes the Greek Orthodox community across Canada a blessed Easter, filled with the light and hope of the Resurrection.

May Christ's triumph over death bring warmth, peace, and renewed strength to every home.

He is risen!

Cretan culture on full display at annual gathering



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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



A hall filled with the sound of the lyra and the measured steps of traditional dance set the tone at the Palace Convention Centre in Laval on March 28, 2026, where members of the Cretan community and their guests gathered for the annual dance of the Cretans' Association of Montreal. The evening unfolded as both a cultural affirmation and a civic gathering, bringing into focus the continuity of language, music, and heritage among Greek Canadians while highlighting the role of community institutions in sustaining regional identity across generations.

The program opened with welcoming remarks that framed the evening as a milestone for the association's cultural work. "Tonight is very special," one speaker told attendees, noting the presence of visiting artist Antonis Martzakis and his ensemble from Kissamos, Crete. The address also underscored the scale of youth participation, with organizers pointing to "90 of our children wearing traditional Cretan costumes," a visible marker of continuity that resonated across the ballroom.

Throughout the evening, dance groups performed in coordinated formations, their movements reflecting regional styles preserved through years of instruction within the association. Rows of dancers in traditional red and white attire moved in unison across the floor, their steps guided by the steady rhythm of live musicians positioned at the rear of the hall.

Younger performers were also featured prominently, including children who took the floor individually and in groups, drawing sustained applause from families seated along the perimeter.

In an interview conducted for this newspaper, association president Emmanuel Revelakis placed the event within a broader community context. Attendance exceeded expectations, with "more than 750 people" present, a figure he described as a "huge success" compared with previous years. The turnout, he said, reflected both the appeal of the featured artist and the continued strength of the association's dance programs. "People came for the artist and for the children who dance, and their families," he noted, emphasizing the intergenerational character of the gathering.

The event also drew the presence of officials and dignitaries visiting Montreal for Greek Independence Day commemorations, including Greece's Deputy Prime Minister Kostis Hatzidakis, himself of Cretan origin. He addressed attendees and remarked on the scale of participation, stating that he "did not expect to see so many people" at a community dance, before offering a traditional verse associated with Crete. Local representatives and community leaders were also in attendance, reinforcing the event's standing within the broader civic landscape.

Beyond the performances, the evening functioned as a social gathering anchored in shared customs. Guests dined together and remained engaged throughout the program, with many joining in later dances. Revelakis described the highlight of the night succinctly as "the celebration, the full celebration," reflecting a sense of collective participation that extended beyond the stage.

The Cretans' Association of Montreal has long positioned its annual dance as a focal point for cultural transmission, combining music, language, and costume within a structured community event. Its activities throughout the year include dance instruction and cultural programming aimed at younger members, reinforcing ties to Crete while situating those traditions within the Canadian context.

Demosthenes school dance celebrates Hellenic heritage and secures funding for campus upgrades



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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Soft lights cast a warm glow across the elegant halls of the Chateau Royal in Laval as students stepped in unison to the rhythm of the daouli, transforming the venue into an enchanted forest for the annual Demosthenes school dance. The gathering on March 14 served as a vibrant testament to the enduring strength of the Greek diaspora, bridging generations through shared cultural expressions while mobilizing essential financial support to modernize educational facilities for the Hellenic youth of Greater Montreal.

The visual elements of the evening brought the theme to life, creating an immersive experience for the families in attendance. Dancers from the Saint Bruno dance school in Laval brought a touch of grace to the floor, moving fluidly across the space in elegant gradient dresses that transitioned smoothly from deep brown to pure white. The hall was adorned with blooming floral centerpieces that enhanced the carefully curated woodland atmosphere. Children in light pastel dresses formed tight circles, their arms linked in traditional formations as they executed the intricate steps of regional Greek dances. The collective energy of the room peaked during a lively interactive performance by percussionist Marco Tam Tam, who carried a glittering hand drum through the audience while young guests raised their arms, holding glowing, multicolored wands that illuminated the darkened room.

Parent committee president Helen Papadatos formally welcomed the gathered families and dignitaries, articulating the core purpose driving the extensive volunteer effort. "Tonight's theme, an enchanted evening, truly captures the spirit in this room," Papadatos said. "Sparkling lights, joyful laughter and a community that comes together to support something we all care deeply about, our children and their school". She emphasized that events of this scale serve as a powerful reminder of what a united community can build. "Through your support and generosity, you help make this program possible and allow us to create significant resources that will truly benefit our children," Papadatos added. "Because of you, we can continue to support and create activities, responsibilities, and opportunities to help children learn, grow, and succeed".

The celebration marked the eleventh consecutive year that the parent committee organized a gathering of this magnitude. The dedicated organizing members began their detailed preparations for the March 14 event in September, dedicating countless hours to secure venues, arrange entertainment, and coordinate the complex logistics. "Members have spent many months, many hours staying up late to prepare this night," one committee representative noted during the event. The core parent committee team directing the initiative included treasurer Dimitri Panousakis, vice president Sandrine Wimett, community representative Stamatis Tsibariotis, and secretary Ioanna.

Over 120 children from the Demosthenes campus participated in the performances, having rehearsed their routines extensively with their teacher Denise Eleftheratos to ensure the cultural heritage was represented accurately and proudly. The cultural showcase featured the Zaramaros, a traditional song and dance from the region of Thrace typically performed during festive community gatherings to express joy and communal spirit. The students also executed the Bazarkana, another traditional Greek dance from Thrace that expresses joy, liveliness, and a strong collective spirit among the dancers. Furthermore, they presented a traditional island dance from Lefkada, highlighting the diverse regional artistry of Greece. The opening dance, referred to as the little flower, symbolized the simplicity and beauty of nature, mirroring a blossoming flower. A special authentic element of this opening performance involved Stathis Niakandreou, a former student of the Socrates network, who provided the acoustic rhythmic foundation by playing the traditional daouli drum.

The preservation of language, music, and identity remains a central mission for the community leaders and educators in attendance. George Tsitouras, president of the fundraising committee for the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal, spoke directly to the civic duty of supporting these educational institutions. "Our children are dancing, bringing great joy for the parents, the grandfathers, and the grandmothers," Tsitouras said. "Our schools keep Hellenism in Montreal and we are here to help them". Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal president Vassilis Angelopoulos addressed the crowd to highlight the collective financial achievements of the diaspora and the direct impact of their generosity. The broader community had previously aimed for a specific financial target during their recent radiothon, ultimately surpassing their goals by generating 450,000 dollars. During the gathering, Angelopoulos presented a cheque for 90,000 dollars to the Demosthenes campus, representing one fifth of the total funds raised, which were distributed equally among the five network schools. "We had this honor tonight along with George Tsitouras and the other members of the board of directors to make this presentation and give the message to everyone that we really do what we say," Angelopoulos said. "To be able to take pride and celebrate together with our children, together of course with the future of Hellenism, we are proud of them".

The financial contributions generated from the evening support specific structural and educational upgrades for the Demosthenes campus. The development plans include the installation of a comprehensive air conditioning system, the replacement of classroom desks across the entire school, and the integration of new student lockers to create a more comfortable learning environment. Additional resources are allocated to create a dedicated art atelier where the young students can practice painting and visual arts. "This year of course we will have the atelier, a place where children will draw in the school," an organizer confirmed.

Principal Lison Thibeault expressed her gratitude for the continuous support system surrounding the campus. "The team of parents is always very involved in our school," Thibeault said. "We are all here with an important goal, which is to receive money for our school, to improve the good of our children". Georgia Tsakali, the general director of the Socrates Demosthenes school network, commended the vibrant energy within the fully occupied venue, praising the parent committee and the principal for their highly effective collaborative work. "We are here today in the wonderful halls of the Chateau Royale for the dance of the Demosthenes branch, and we are having a very good time," Tsakali said. "I believe you hear the beautiful music, the hall inside is full and it has a lot of high spirits".

Following the traditional performances, the evening transitioned into a wider celebration. Disc jockey Peter provided the musical backdrop for the remainder of the night as families filled the dance floor. Attendees participated in a silent auction and a raffle featuring over 17,000 dollars in total rewards, including flight tickets provided by Air Canada. The evening concluded with the drawing of the main prizes. Matthew Ortega won the 5,000 dollar grand prize.


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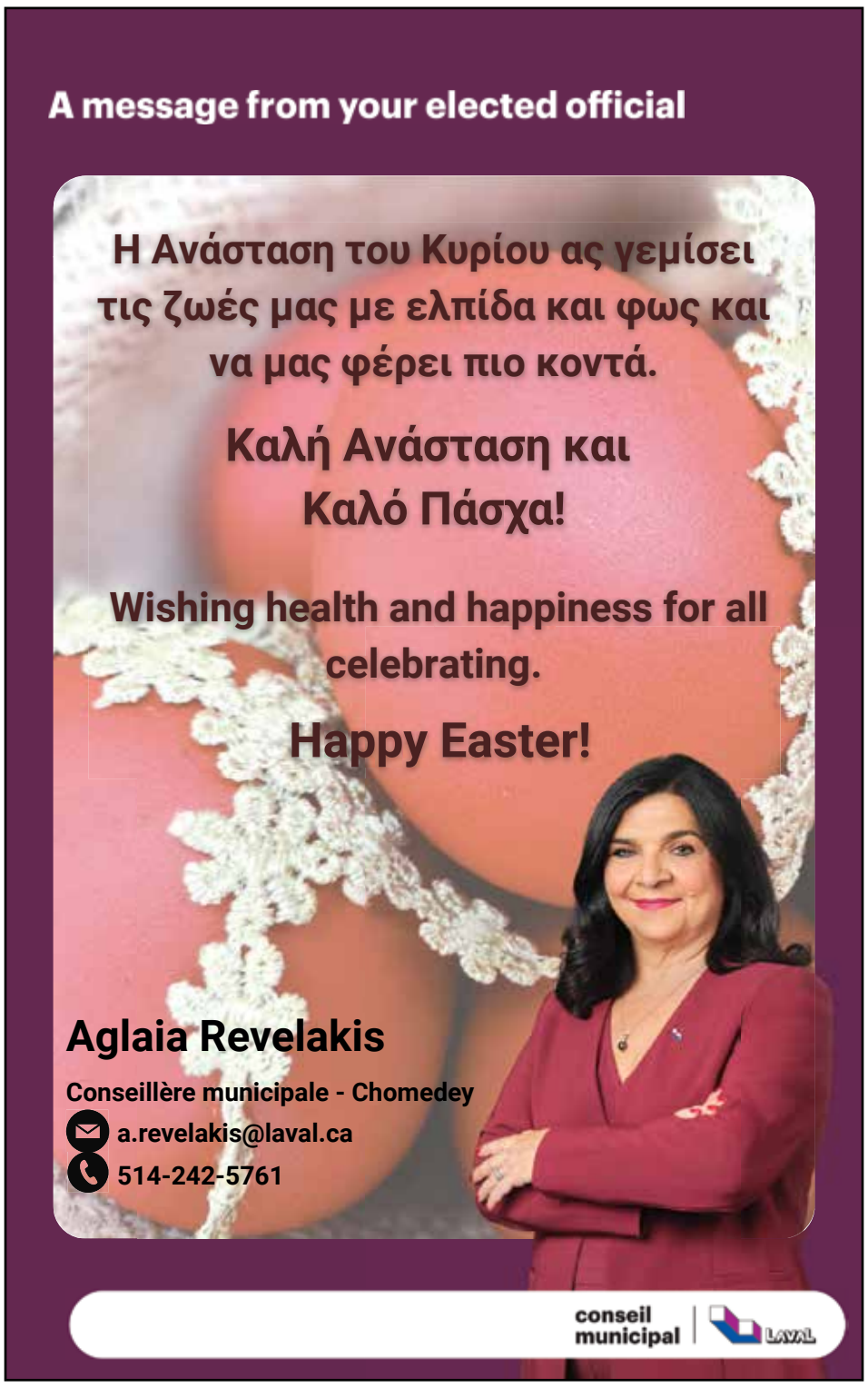
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Why Greeks dye eggs red at Easter

by Dimitri Papadopoulos



The red-dyed egg, known in Greek as ***kòkkina avgà***, is one of the most enduring symbols of Orthodox Easter, combining layers of theology, early Christian practice and popular tradition into a single, familiar object.

The custom reaches back to the earliest centuries of Christianity. Historical accounts place the practice of dyeing eggs red among early Christian communities in Mesopotamia, where the colour served as a visible sign of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. From there, the tradition spread gradually across the Eastern Christian world and became firmly rooted in Greek religious life, preserved through both liturgical practice and household ritual.

The symbolism is both simple and precise. The egg itself represents the sealed tomb of Christ. Its hard shell evokes the stone that enclosed it, while the life hidden within suggests the promise of what is to come. When the egg is cracked, it mirrors the opening of the tomb and the Resurrection. The colour red carries equal weight, representing the blood of Christ and the act of sacrifice that precedes the renewal of life.

In the Orthodox calendar, eggs are traditionally dyed on Holy Thursday, a day closely tied to the events of the Last Supper and the unfolding of the Passion. In many homes, this moment remains ritualized. Families gather in kitchens where techniques have been passed down across generations, once using natural dyes such as onion skins and today often relying on modern colouring. The method may evolve, but the timing and meaning remain constant.

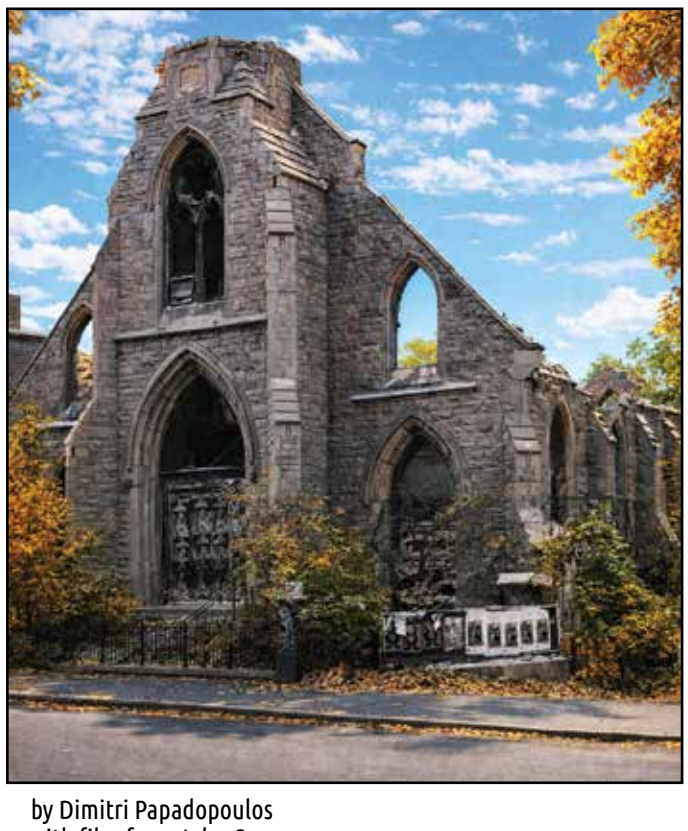
Alongside theological meaning, the red egg is reinforced by enduring tradition. One well-known account describes Mary Magdalene presenting eggs to the Roman Emperor Tiberius while proclaiming the Resurrection. According to the story, the eggs turned red, serving as a sign of the truth of her words. While not part of formal doctrine, such narratives have helped carry the custom across centuries.

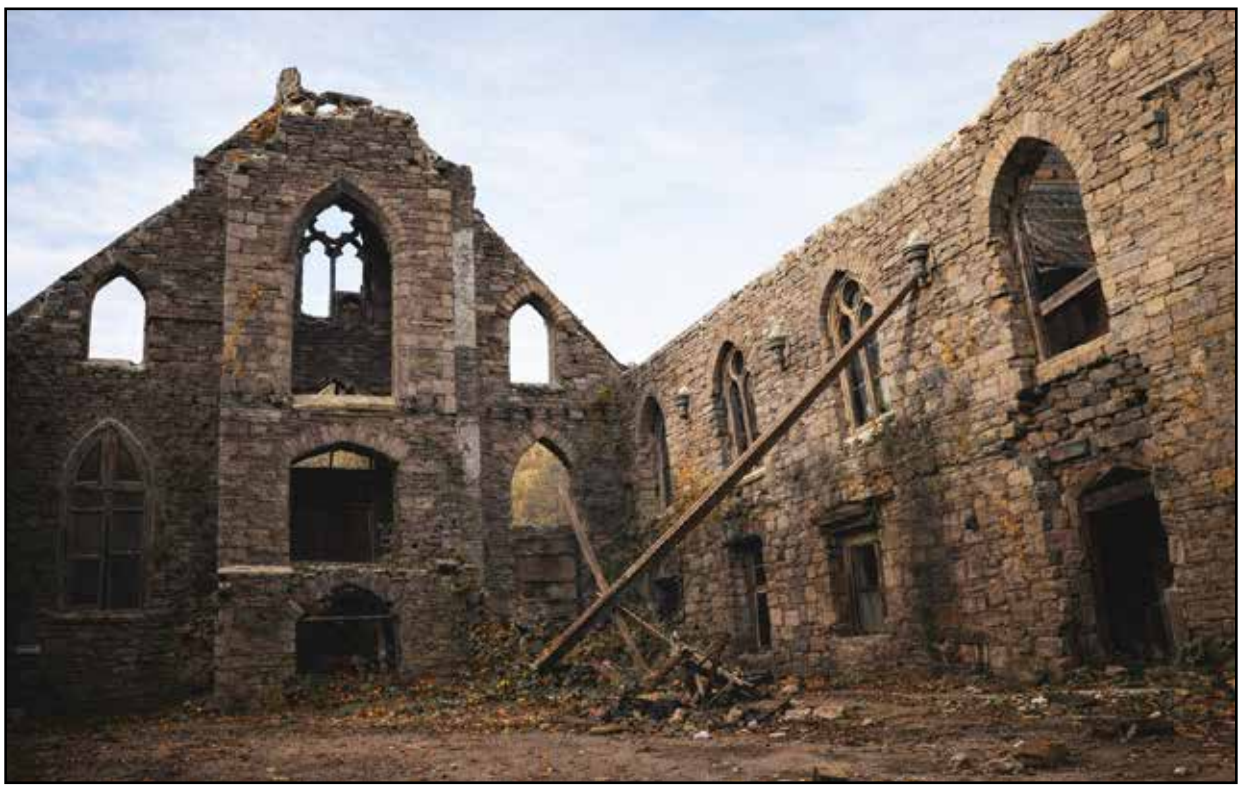
The red egg carries both symbolic and practical meaning within the Easter tradition. During celebrations, families and communities take part in ***tsoùgrisma***, the ritual cracking of eggs against one another. Each participant attempts to break the other's egg while keeping their own intact, a simple act that reflects the central message of Easter. What appears sealed can be opened. What appears final can give way to life.

In its form and meaning, the red egg remains one of the most complete visual expressions of the Easter story. It bridges the sacred and the everyday, carrying within it the language of faith, memory and continuity across generations and across continents.



How ambitious visions and mounting debt sealed the fate of Holy Trinity





by Dimitri Papadopoulos
with files from John Cocconas

In the previous edition of The Montreal Greek Times, we explored the ambitious architectural visions that eclipsed the immediate desire to restore the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church following the devastating 1986 fire. Our ongoing retrospective now turns to the complex administrative, political, and ecclesiastical struggles that consumed the Greek diaspora in the subsequent years. To ensure a rigorous and accurate historical record four decades later, we sought the direct input of Nicholas T. Pagonis, a former president of the Hellenic Community of Montreal. His extensive firsthand knowledge of the era profoundly clarifies the established narrative, revealing a complex reality driven by shifting demographics, severe financial realities, and high-level banking interventions.

For the pioneering generation of Greek immigrants, the intersection of Sherbrooke Street and St. Laurent Boulevard held the echoes of their earliest Canadian memories and profound spiritual devotion. It was within those stone walls that countless newly arrived immigrants sought solace, gathering to hear the Divine Liturgy in their native tongue and to celebrate their earliest 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 Hellenic heritage.

However, the romanticized memory of a thriving cultural hub interrupted solely by a tragic winter fire obscures a harsher truth. Years before the blaze, Holy Trinity was already struggling to survive. The Greek demographic had steadily migrated away from the downtown core. Parishioner participation had declined to alarming levels, with the vast majority of the remaining congregation commuting from the South Shore. The church found itself entirely unable to cover its basic operating expenses, leaving the community administration to manage an increasingly vacant and costly heritage building.

When the catastrophic fire reduced the sanctuary to blackened stone on Jan. 16, 1986, the immediate public reaction was one of grief and mobilization. Early grassroots fundraising efforts, championed by Father Konstantinos Chalkias and later by the late George Savoidakis, successfully raised $115,000 for the church. At the time of the fundraising, Savoidakis was a highly visible advocate for cultural minorities, serving as a municipal councillor for the Jean-Talon district, which encompassed the southern half of the Greek-dominated Parc-Extension neighbourhood. Yet the community leadership, headed by President Adrian Maris, recognized that a standalone reconstruction of the church was financially unviable. Instead of a simple rebuild, the administration actively sought the commercial exploitation of the highly valuable downtown space.

Historical accounts frequently portray Father Chalkias as a tragic figure desperate to return to a rebuilt Holy Trinity. The administrative reality of the time dictates otherwise. The priest did not actively wish to return to the Sherbrooke Street location and was instead seeking a new appointment at St. George's Cathedral.

The grand architectural visions for the Place Sainte-Trinité project proposed a sprawling modern commercial complex that would include only a small commemorative chapel to honour the site's religious history. On July 8, 1987, architect Dan S. Hanganu was called upon to ratify the binding decisions of the plenary session taken earlier that May. The official contract 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. The comprehensive plans included the restoration of the Godin building situated at the southwest corner of Sherbrooke and St. Laurent, alongside the construction of a massive eight-storey building rising above the street level, complete with a basement floor and three full levels of underground garage space. A defining feature of the design was a glassed-in atrium intended to seamlessly connect the historical elements with the new structure.

To understand the vast gap that had opened between the community administration and the religious authorities during this period, one must examine a critical legislative maneuver that forever altered the governance of the local diaspora. The root of the conflict was Private Bill 231, formally titled An Act respecting the Hellenic Community of Montreal. Sponsored by Parti Québecois Member of the National Assembly Gérald Godin, this pivotal legislation was adopted as Chapter 58 of the Statutes of Quebec on June 18, 1980. The bill officially changed the organization's name from the Hellenic-Canadian Community of the Island of Montreal to the Hellenic Community of Montreal.

More importantly, it restructured the polity of the community, transferring administrative and financial authority completely away from the Greek Orthodox Diocese and placing it firmly under the control of lay community directors. By granting these new secular powers, Private Bill 231 provided the civic administration with the absolute legal coverage to manage properties, form regional councils, and pursue the union of peripheral communities independently of the religious hierarchs. The legislation effectively defunded the local Diocese, sparking a bitter administrative war. The strategy employed by the religious authorities involved the illegal, direct collection of fees for sacraments performed within the churches. Community President Adrian Maris utilized the new powers granted by Private Bill 231 to challenge these ecclesiastical actions, taking the dispute directly to the civil justice system.

The internal communal chaos was further aggravated by incidents like the notorious "Daperis case". This event revolved around a formal decision to expel community member John Daperis. The expulsion was a direct retaliation for an article he had written and published on the front page in his Hellenic Voice newspaper eight months earlier, publicly calling upon the Bishop to take up his responsibilities. The provocative title 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, leading to legal battles that drained tens of thousands of dollars from the community's coffers.

This environment of administrative tension attracted the attention of partisan political operatives. Political developments unfolding in Greece, notably the rise of the PASOK party, prompted local loyalists to seek influence within the Montreal diaspora. These political figures initially attempted to gain power independently, forming an electoral slate under the name Democratic Change. When they failed to secure a majority in the community elections, they pivoted to collaborate directly with Adrian Maris. Despite this alliance, Maris never relinquished his authority and maintained full, absolute control over the community's trajectory and decision-making processes.

The grand architectural designs for the unrealized commercial complex absorbed $262,116 from the community treasury in preparatory fees alone. The community eventually found itself paralyzed by a staggering accumulated debt of roughly $10 million. The monumental task of addressing this crippling financial burden fell upon a succeeding executive committee described in historical records as the insubordinate right-wingers of Vasilios Katsambanis. Previous archival reports suggested that this administration rescued the community through the goodwill of Greek government ministers. The precise financial mechanism, however, was far more pragmatic.

The vital refinancing of the community was secured through the direct intervention of Theodoros Karatzas, the Governor of the National Bank of Greece. At the time, the local Montreal branch of the bank was severely entangled with two non-performing loans, one held by the community and another associated with Adrian Maris. These bad debts were actively creating critical liquidity problems for the local branch. To resolve this banking crisis, a new $5 million loan was issued with the official guarantee of the Greek State. This strategic financial maneuver dynamically served the bank's interests by clearing the problematic local ledgers, while simultaneously rescuing the Montreal community from immediate financial collapse.

Meanwhile, the physical remains of Holy Trinity sat neglected. The municipal government repeatedly demanded that the community administration properly cover the ruined structure to ensure public safety, an order the administration met with sluggish compliance. Approximately two years after the fire, a specialized team of architects, urban planners, and historians led by University of Montreal professor Janus Baraka expressed significant academic interest in the site's restoration potential. Comprehensive structural research definitively dismissed widespread rumours that the church's foundation had been compromised by extreme heat.

The engineering analysis revealed that the original foundation and the surviving walls were constructed from thick, highly durable stone. This robust masonry was capable of bearing structural loads with a safety factor far exceeding the requirements of modern building codes. Furthermore, the natural downward slope of the Sherbrooke Street terrain provided a highly effective drainage path. This rapid drainage prevented the massive volumes of water deployed by municipal firefighters from pooling and causing any structural degradation to the historic footings.

This expert confirmation that the building could have been safely salvaged yielded no tangible results during the administrative tenure that followed.

In upcoming edition of The Montreal Greek Times, the focus turns to a renewed restoration initiative undertaken by the Katsambanis administration. The reporting will also examine the second fire that struck the abandoned structure, an event that further accelerated the site's decline into what President Pagonis formally recorded as a public urinal and gathering place for illicit activity. Subsequent coverage will detail the final demolition of the remaining ruins, the role and obligations of the financial guarantors, and the emphyteutic lease arrangements that ultimately reshaped the historic site.

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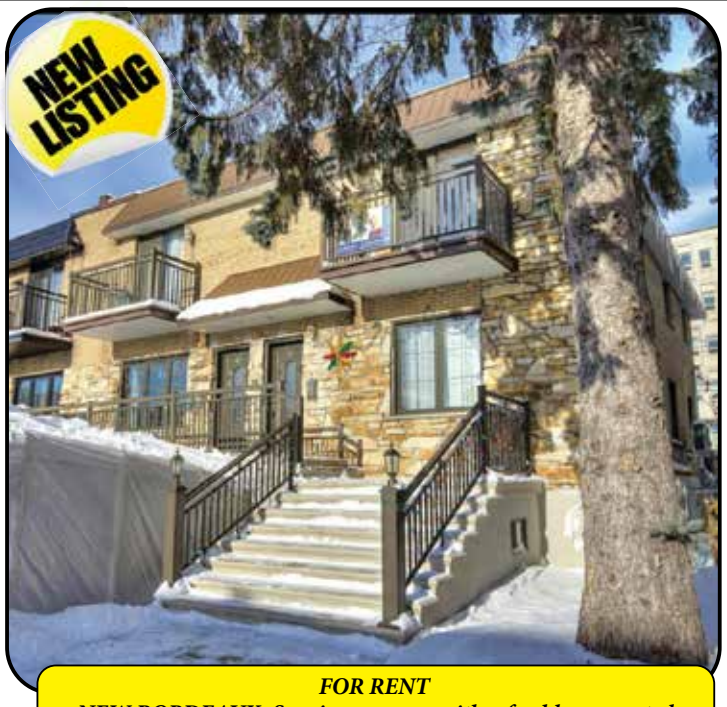
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