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Pages
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Supreme Court Rules No Prayers at Council Meetings

Al-Mersal-Toronto: -In a unanimous decision made on April 12, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that elected officials do not have the right to recite the Lord's prayers at municipal council meetings, a decision that helps defines freedom of religion in Canada.

with the Quebec Human Rights Tribunal, requesting an end to prayers as well



as the removal of religious symbols at city hall, including the crucifix and a Sacred Heart of Jesus statue.

The custom was that councillors stood, made the sign of the cross, and recited a 20-second prayer before the start of any meeting. The Quebec Human Rights Tribunal ruled in Simoneau's favour, concluding that prayer goes against the city's obligation to remain neutral on religion. And Saguenay officials were ordered to remove all religious

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Canada Joins China-Led Asian Bank...?

Al Mersal Toronto: - Canada broke its silence over whether it would take part in the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, signaling it was actively considering joining despite U.S. and Japanese reservations. As the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is becoming an important part of the development finance landscape. In October 2014, 21 countries signed the agreement on establishing the AIIB,



which is intended to finance infrastructure projects in the Asia-Pacific Region. The bank plans to rapidly increase its initial subscribed capital of \$50 billion to \$100 billion. However, IMF chief Christine Lagarde said earlier in March that the IMF and the World

Bank would be "delighted" to cooperate with the AIIB. Beijing has repeatedly said that AIIB will be a fine complement to the existing international financial institutions. A senior Canadian finance official e idea of a new Asian infrastructure investment bank. But wants to make sure the AIIB's governance met the high standards expected of such an institution and would take

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Sex Education Change Is it for the Better or the Worse?

By: Harry Ziad Malawi



In light of the Ontario government's new amendment to the sex education curriculum set to be implemented this year, many concerned, angry and outraged parents and religious group and organizations began to demonstrate and protest the proposed changes to the curriculum. Many parents were very vocal and loud, sighting this as an infringement on their religious freedom and civil rights liberties, (justifiably so) and are concerned about the negative effect in teaching explicit sex education to their young and innocent children. After so many protests, Premier Kathleen Wynne, who is openly Gay, said some of the opposition was motivated by homophobia and right wing conservative opposition party. But parents and religious leaders said that they came out because they are angry against the Liberal plan to teach early grades about age-inappropriate topics like masturbation, anal intercourse, oral sex, vaginal lubrication, and the idea that being male or female is merely a "social construct" as well as the correct names of sexual body parts such as the penis, anus and vagina, and the sexual reproductive systems and diseases. The new amendment (the first in 19 years), will be mandatory and will be implemented in all public and private schools across the province starting September of this year. Under the new changes, students from grades (1-12) will gradually learn about same-sex relationships, the dangers of online bullying and sex-ting. Lessons about puberty, masturbation and "gender

expression" are also expected to be taught in grade 6. This amendment has faced numerous demonstrations and flagrant protests as many consider this too early and unnecessary for the education of children at the primary school level, arguing that such knowledge threatens a child's innocence and childhood may cause significant risks to their intellectual, social and educational development. There is no doubt that Premier Kathleen Wynne has good intention and best interest at heart for our children's safety and well fare. Being a Lesbian and openly Gay has nothing to do with Premier Wynne's decision or any negative reaction to it. However, when you consider the grave risk by giving our young innocent children a large dose of graphic and unnecessary explicit sexual curriculum at a tender age, which many parents and religious group and organizations are opposing to it, from the Arabs and Muslims communities to Christians, Jews, Hindus and Sikhs, one begins to wonder about the wisdom of the Ontario Government, behind such a decision. Safety and well being of our children and educating them and protecting them from cyberspace bullies and internet predators are everyone's concerns. But teaching them about the facts of life especially in their early and innocent childhood before reaching the age of puberty, may rob them of their innocence and could pose a huge threat on their intellectual and sexual behaviour in later years and such responsibility should be left to the parents and guardian.

The way I see it anyway.

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Canadian Arab Network and AL-Mersal Meet Premier Kathleen Wynne

Al-Mersal-Toronto: -Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne spoke to the ethnic media recently at Verdi banquet hall in Mississauga,



members of the press that her government is working to give Ontario's children a strong start in life, as well making sure hard-



giving her thoughts on their importance and the stories they put out to their readership.

The event was organized by the Liberal party to help build a strong relationship with the premier and the Ethnic press. The Canadian



working people earn a fair wage. In October of 2014, the Ontario government raised minimum wage to \$11.25 and passed legislation to schedule a regular annual increase tied to Ontario's consumer index.



Arab Network and Al-Mersal Representative were among the many guests that were invited to the event.

our homes and smart phones which is very accessible to our children.

The amendment to the



And said that her government is making ensure that everyone in the Ontario has a secure level of income in retirement; "the



The event was marred by some people who came out to protest the new sex-ed curriculum.

curriculum is to guard our children and to inform them of what is going on in their

continuum of life from childhood to retirement." She added, since 2/3 of Ontario does not have a workplace pension plan and most



do not have sufficient retirement savings. This major initiative; the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is led by MPP Mitzie Hunter.



press, "The sex-ed amendment is needed to protect our children from the cyberspace bullies and easy social media flows through

environment, unfortunately the protesters are misinformed.

Wynne goes on to tell the



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Will the Senate debate be a factor in this year's election?

By: Sahar Al-Majali:
With the criminal trial of suspended Senator Mike Duffy set to begin, the majority of Canadians agree that when it comes to the future of this country's upper house, its existing form has to change. They are split however, on whether change should come in the way of reforms to, or an outright end of this 148-year-old institution.

These are among the findings of the latest Angus Reid poll opinion poll. Regardless of how closely Canadians are watching these issues that have been plaguing the Senate for the past two years, they're unequivocal in how they feel about the future of the Senate.

From the intense media scrutiny surrounding the trial of Mike Duffy, to suspended Senator Pamela Wallin's police investigations as well the housing and expense claims by Patrick Brazeau, fewer than one-fifth of Canadians say Senate issues will be a deciding factor as they cast their ballots in this fall's expected election.

To the people of Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the Senate is most dead. Half of whom advocate to abolishing it.

Indeed, Senate reform has been attempted, and has failed at various times in the history of the 105-seat chamber - most recently - last year.

At that time, the federal government proposed non-binding elections to select senators, term limits of nine years, and a mechanism to abolish the Senate altogether.

In a unanimous decision last April, however, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the Harper government required substantial provincial consent to introduce such changes. Harper has subsequently said Canadians are "essentially stuck" with the Senate as it is.

The Senate of Canada has been a political hot potato for almost as long as it has existed; bringing migraines to whichever party is in power at a given time.

Indeed, it was outgoing Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's stacking the Senate with 20 appointees during the last two years of his term that ultimately left his successor John Turner grasping for answers when challenged by then-Conservative Leader Brian Mulroney during what would turn out to be a disastrous 1984 election campaign for the Liberals.

While much of the public scrutiny and furor over these latest Senate scandals brings troubles to the Harper government, Canadians are skeptical that any federal leader is capable of owning the high ground on the Senate.

Saudi Strikes Against Yemen, a first

Al Mersal, Toronto — When Houthi gunmen, in conjunction with some Yemeni army units, conducted a military exercise in Saada province on Saudi Arabia's southern border. These Houthi activities may have been the direct cause of the largest-ever bombing campaign against Yemen, which has not fought a war with another country in 80 years. Ongoing internal wars, however, have torn Yemen apart — including the current one between Hadi's forces and the Houthis; al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the army; and the six wars between 2004 and 2009 in Saada between the Houthis and the government. Yet, March 26 was a defining moment in Yemen's modern history, as Sanaa

in Yemen, known as Operation Decisive Storm, started by bombing quality targets that paralyzed Yemeni air defenses. About 185 modern military aircraft, mostly Saudi Arabian, destroyed military targets, most notably the air bases of al-Dailami and al-Adan. They also destroyed weapons stores in Sanaa and Saada, as well as camps for Special Forces and reserve forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh located west and south of the capital. Never before has an Arab military alliance been formed under the umbrella of the Arab League against another Arab country. However, it seems that Saudi King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud is trying a different approach than his predecessor



King Abdullah, both toward Yemen and other Gulf states. For example, Salman was able to bring Qatar back into the lineup in relation to Yemen. Qatar is now on the same side as Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime in Egypt, a regime that Qatar described as taking power through a coup. While the majority of Yemenis would agree that the Houthis' actions and behavior have been problematic for Yemen, they are split on whether foreign intervention is the best way to address the issue. Ansar Allah's opponents see the coalition strikes as a way to discipline Ansar Allah, which has been bullying its political partners and Yemenis by never committing to agreed-upon peace deals.

The Houthis' military progress from their northern stronghold has been an unprecedented source of concern for Riyadh since mid-2014. That concern culminated in September 2014, when the Houthis tightened their grip on Sanaa, whereby the army and security establishments came under their direct control.

The Saudi-led military operation against the Houthis

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Until now, no clear timeline exists for the strikes on Yemen. And the Houthis do not seem willing to leave Aden.

These two facts portend a civil war that may last for decades.

Would IRAN Framework Agreement Boost Regional Diplomacy?

US Secretary of State John Kerry (L), US Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, the head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization Ali Akbar Salehi and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif at the Beau Rivage Palace Hotel in Lausanne, (photo by REUTERS/Brendan Smialowski)

US President Barack Obama said on April 2 that the framework agreement reached between the six world powers and Iran represents "[a] historic opportunity to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons in Iran, and to do so peacefully, with the international community firmly behind us." The Foreign Relations Committee will vote April 14 on the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, which would require that any final agreement with Iran be subject to a 60-day review before the president could waive or suspend sanctions on Iran.

While in Israel, it is reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's inner circle was "shocked into silence" before going on offense. Following a telephone call with Obama, Netanyahu railed against the deal, saying it "would legitimize Iran's nuclear program, bolster Iran's economy and increase Iran's aggression and terror throughout the Middle East and beyond."

Some members of the US Congress were skeptical of the prospect of a completed accord between the six world powers by the June 30 deadline.

Bob Corker Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in a statement that the United

States "must remain clear-eyed regarding Iran's continued resistance to concessions, long history of covert nuclear weapons-related activities, support of terrorism and its current role in destabilizing the region."

Sen. John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said, "Iran is clearly on the offensive across the Middle East."

Its malign activities, from Iraq and Syria to Lebanon and Yemen, are provoking a regional sectarian conflict of massive proportions."

However, progress in nuclear diplomacy with Iran offers the opportunity for comparable progress on regional crises. Of which, some of these trends are already underway

Iran is also instrumental in whether there is peace or war on Israel's border. Hezbollah and Israel have mostly maintained a deterrent relationship.

The point here is that an evolving US-Iran conversation about the lifting of sanctions that are targeted at Iran's support of terrorism, would eventually lead to a conversation about Hezbollah's role in Syria and Lebanon.

This brings us to Yemen, which is breezily characterized by critics of the nuclear talks with Iran as another Iranian scheme.

No question that Iran's backing of the rebel forces, in coordination with the intrigues of former Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh, has given Tehran a provocative foothold on Saudi Arabia's border.

But the Yemen crisis defies a simple Saudi-Iran storyline.



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The STARS OF THE MEDICAL WORLD, Toronto's 10 Best Doctors

Toronto is the hub of medical research in Canada, with dozens of state-of-the-art facilities and new labs opening all the time.

Below, we profile 10 of the city's top physicians.

The list was assembled from prominent figures in the city's medical community and polling of nearly 1,000 Toronto doctors, asking them to nominate the best practitioners, Surgical Oncology Jonathan Irish, Chief of surgical oncology, Princess Margaret cancer centre.



JONATHAN IRISH

He's had huge success removing minuscule tumors and he's operated on advanced cancers of the head and neck.

Irish and his colleagues have performed over 50 of these surgeries since the OR launched last year.

For patients lying amid this pile of impressive hardware, it all amounts to early intervention, less cutting and pain, quicker recovery, and a good chance you won't have to come back.



ALLAN SLOMOVIC

Eye surgery-Allan Slomovic, Research director of the cornea, Service, UHN.

In 2010, when Allan Slomovic confirmed that a young Queen's student named Taylor Binns had the rare disease, Slomovic decided a stem cell transplant was his only hope.

The procedure involved harvesting stem cells from Binns's sister's eye, then attaching them to Binns's damaged cornea with a bit of tissue glue and tiny stitches.

The stem cells worked their regenerative magic, replacing Binns's diseased cells.

A month later, he was pain-free and able to drive a car.

It was the first surgery of its kind performed in Canada.

Since then, Slomovic has also developed the hospital's new cornea replacement program and is working to bring over a pioneering prosthetic therapeutic ocular lens from Boston, all part of his grand plan to make UHN the country's go-to ocular regenerative program.



TODD MAINPRIZE

Brain Surgery, Todd Mainprize, Interim head of neurosurgery, Sunnybrook.

He's young by brain surgeon standards and has made a name in the risky field of tumour surgery, where many patients have fewer than 15 months to live.

If Mainprize's clinical trials

go well, Sunnybrook could soon be offering a groundbreaking treatment for brain tumours buried deep in the skull.

He uses a Jetsons-esque helmet to zap tumours with powerful ultrasound waves without a single incision and without overheating the skull.



SHOO LEE

Pediatrics Shoo Lee, Pediatrician-in-chief and director of the maternal infant care research centre, Mount Sinai

Thirty years ago, parents with very sick or pre-term infants were shut out of the neonatal intensive care unit, their noses literally pressed to the glass, watching as their babies were swaddled, soothed and attended to by hospital staff. Lee, an accomplished neonatologist wooed to Sinai from Alberta, not only welcomed parents into the NICU, he tasked them with daily charting and monitoring, and actively consulted them in all decision-making.

His Family Integrated Care Program, launched in 2011, was the first in North America to incorporate this level of parental care.



HEATHER ROSS

Heart surgery Heather Ross, Director of the heart transplant program, Peter Munk cardiac centre, UHN.

At one of the province's most advanced heart clinics, Ross sees the worst-off cardiac patients whose hearts won't let them walk stairs or get dressed without gasping for air.

After she exhausts all treatment options (medications, bypass surgery, angioplasty), Ross shepherds patients through the long transplant process.

When Ross isn't saving the brokenhearted, she fronts an R&B band, appropriately called the Marginal Donors.



TIRONE DAVID

Open-heart surgery Tirone David Head of cardiovascular surgery, UHN.

This veteran surgeon and once-mentor to Dr. Oz has performed 14,000 open-heart surgeries and invented some 20 surgical techniques, largely in the field of heart-valve repair.

One procedure, aptly called the David Operation, he came up with in the OR when he realized the patient's aortic valve, when cleared of scar tissue, didn't need replacing but some light support with a

plastic tube.

Today, 20 years after that pioneering surgery, it's standard treatment all over the world.

David's colleagues and students speak of the "Tirone factor" when describing his surgical creativity.

He's also known for beyond-the-call bedside care, staying late into the night to ensure his patient is in the clear.

Though retirement is in the back of his mind, David is still a fixture in the OR and continues to tinker in the lab with new therapies in his exhaustive effort to improve heart-valve treatments.



GORDON SUSSMAN

Allergies, Gordon Sussman, Director, Sussman allergy and immunology clinic.

In the 1980s, Sussman was one of the guys who discovered latex allergies, among the most significant allergy findings in decades.

Reactions were mistaken for epidemics in hospitals until Sussman's research pinpointed the source of the allergy (a protein in the gloves).

He worked with the latex industry and government to remove the offending ingredient, and today latex allergies cause barely a whimper. Lately, Sussman has been focused on peanuts and ways to desensitize the severely allergic.

His clinical trials had anaphylactic patients, both kids and adults, eating increasing doses of peanut flour, then eventually whole peanuts.

Today, he treats a handful of patients this way, offering some assurance that they won't die if they mistakenly eat a peanut crumb on a restaurant salad.

His clinic treats thousands of patients a year for everything from food allergies (most commonly milk, eggs, peanuts and seafood) to chronic hives, and pollen and dust mite allergies.



DAVID JUURLINK

Pharmacology, David Juurlink, Staff physician, general internal medicine and clinical pharmacology, Sunnybrook

A decade ago, when scores of people started showing up in Toronto emergency rooms with dangerously high potassium levels in their blood, which can lead to serious heart problems, David Juurlink discovered many of them had been taking a popular heart drug in combination with a certain blood pressure medication.

He sounded the first alarm about the risks of this interaction, and doctors eased

up on prescriptions of the heart drug. In addition to solving epidemiological riddles, he also routinely gets called into Sunnybrook's emergency room or intensive care unit to crack individual patient mysteries.



SARA GRAY

Emergency room care Sara Gray, Physician, critical care and emergency medicine, St. Michael's

Gray's clinical expertise in both emergency and intensive care is a rare asset in medicine and became crucial when a young patient recently arrived at the St. Michael's Hospital emergency room with a gunshot wound to the abdomen, the bullet settling in his chest.

It was a dire scene the whole way through, and after keeping him alive in the ER, she transferred into the ICU, where she could seamlessly shepherd him through surgery and the dicey recovery period.

Gray also plays a major role in the hospital's ability to respond to crises. After she contracted SARS while on the job in 2003, she began to think about system-wide gaps and unpreparedness. (A decade ago, most hospitals didn't have pandemic strategies.) She studied disaster planning at Yale and recently wrote the general disaster plan for St. Mike's, which was tested during the G20 summit, ensuring simple but vital logistical improvements like extra beds and staff on standby.



NOWELL SOLISH

Skin cancer, Nowell Solish, Director of the non-melanoma skin cancer clinic, Women's college.

Canadians are more likely to get non-melanoma skin cancer than all other cancers combined.

Though it rarely kills people, growth can be fierce and highly disfiguring, and it's these more aggressive tumours that Nowell Solish deals with on a daily basis.

The clinic, which Solish was instrumental in launching in 1993, has become one of the busiest places in the country to treat facial tumours.

The process is more difficult because of all the creases and crannies where cancer cells can hide, and because of cosmetic considerations.

Solish is a master of Mohs surgery, a cautious approach of cutting out a tumour little by little to preserve as much normal tissue as possible, particularly important in facial surgeries.

WYNNE SEIZES THE MOMENT BY JOINING QUEBEC IN CARBON MARKET



By: Lana Richards.

Ontario's Premier Kathleen Wynne is taking a huge political lead and chance by joining Quebec in its fight against global warming; "cap and trade" market to reduce carbon emission.

Wynne believes it is an exciting and propitious moment for this initiative and sees no other options.

Insisting, after years of procrastination, we have to move to a different kind of carbon emission relationship, like the ones spearheaded by BC, Alberta and Quebec; Ontario's most important partner.

Wynne knows the public support and perils, for her decisions on climate

They have maintained a steady opposition, on the issue; whether it's a straight tax or cap-and-trade policy as Quebec's. The Cap-and-trade markets require industrial facilities to purchase or trade permits at a market price for each unit of carbon emitted.

To this date Ontario has offered no pricing details.

Ontario is a net exporter of electricity; it imports carbon-intensive coal-generated power from Michigan, Minnesota and New York.

The cap-and-trade policy may very well threaten this process, making permits more costly.

By making Ontario green Premie Wynne insists she



change, and getting this point over will take some time and doing.

The political culture in Ontario is distinctly different from Quebec, which has a broad unanimity for carbon pricing among the public and politicians, starting with Couillard, his predecessor Jean Charest, and continuing with the past Parti Québécois government.

When Quebec signed up for a joint cap-and-trade auction in 2008 with California, Ontario had remained silent on the issue since then. Now Wynne faces an even harder job in the legislature on selling the Progressive Conservatives, on the economic importance of carbon pricing.

had no choice, "we are in trouble as a planet," she noted, "and everyone who has a role should take on that role."

But some may argue this may not be an effective policy, that we should put Ontario's money to better use. Ontario is too small, and the costs involved in closing all its coal power plants are huge.

If Wynne is making up for lost time, we may never know, but she pushes ahead.

Sticking to her convictions arguing, we need to reinvest in the green economy and green infrastructure as well as in communities in order to maintain a disproportionately positive impact in the future, Otherwise Ontario will be left behind.

Iraqis protesting against poor-quality and expired medicines from China

Al Mersal Toronto — In Iraqi agricultural products are not found in many local grocery stores, as though Iraq is no longer producing food products.

The same applies to locally produced products such as tissues, luxury items and drinks, which cannot be found. Yet, Iraq markets are overflowing with all sorts of imported goods.

A phenomenon that is not new.

Iraqis do not only suffer from the absence of local goods, but also from widespread low-imports. Iraqis accuse traders of importing cheap commodities at the expense of quality, to realize the greatest possible profits.

These practices were confirmed by China's commercial attaché in Iraq, Wang Xi Tong, who blamed

the Iraqi traders of "importing poor-quality products."

And these low-quality imports now include medicines.

Lately there have been multiple complaints and protests demanding accountability for the import of poor-quality and expired medicines that have killed many citizens.

In the city of Karbala, citizens complained about low-quality imported products.

On Feb. 2, protests took place in Basra, southeast of Baghdad, demanding that the market be revitalized with locally made products.

Member of the Council of Representatives of Iraq Hamam Hamoudi called on March 18 for buttressing the local industry with locally made products to boost the country's economy.

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CHINA and Global Governance



JAVIER SOLANA

It is safe to say that the most consequential geostrategic development of the last two decades has been China's rise.

Yet the West has failed to accord China, not to mention the other major emerging economies.

Yet this may be about to change.

As it stands, China relies on bilateral arrangements to deepen its involvement in countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Backed by \$3.8 trillion in currency reserves, China has provided infrastructure investment in exchange for commodities, thereby becoming the world's largest provider of financing for developing countries, with the China Development Bank already

offering more loans than the World Bank.

But, given that these bilateral arrangements are executed by state-owned corporations, they often do not adhere to good international practices. The West has constantly urged China to move toward multilateral processes that meet international standards, while doing more to provide global public goods.

US President Barack Obama has gone so far as to call China a "free rider" for its failure to fulfill the responsibilities that many would expect of a global power.

The fact is, China's new initiatives are not revisionist, but reactive.

If new powers are not given access to the existing global governance structures, they will create structures of their own.

This means that the advanced countries have the power to prevent the international order's fragmentation into ideological and economic blocs but only if they can overcome their strategic mistrust of China.

The West must still do more not only to welcome China to the table of global governance, but also to accept and cooperate with the institutions that the Chinese are now creating.

Only with an open attitude can Western leaders ensure that Chinese-led institutions adopt best practices of multilateralism and accountability, and that they adhere to international labor and environmental standards.

Now is the ideal time to initiate this process.

If the EU, the US, and China take this year to align their intentions, based on their shared interests, they will be prepared to make the most of the G-20 summit in China in 2016.

China's move into multilateral processes is good news for the world.

Europe and especially the US must overcome their strategic mistrust of China.

They must not squander the opportunity to participate in and shape these processes, so that the benefits are shared as widely as possible.

A Massacre in AFRICA



GORDON BROWN

Why is it that schools and schoolchildren have become such high-profile targets for murderous Islamist militants? The 147 students killed in an attack by the extremist group Al-Shabab at a college close to Kenya's border with Somalia are only the latest victims in a succession of outrages in which educational institutions have been singled out for attack.

Last December, in Peshawar, Pakistan, seven Taliban gunmen strode from classroom to classroom in the Army Public School, executing 145 children and teachers.

More recently, as more than 80 pupils in South Sudan were taking their annual exams, fighters invaded their school and

kidnapped them at gunpoint.

Their fate has been to join the estimated 12,000 students conscripted into children's militias in the country's escalating civil war.

In the past five years, there have been nearly 10,000 attacks on schools and educational establishments.

Why is it that schools, which should be recognized as safe havens, have become instruments of war, and schoolchildren have become pawns in extremists' strategies? And why have such attacks been treated so casually – the February abduction in South Sudan elicited barely any international comment – when they in fact constitute crimes against humanity.

Hospitals tend to be more secure, because the Geneva Conventions give them special protection as safe havens, a fact often recognized by even the most murderous of terrorist groups. Until recently, we have done far too little to protect

schools and prevent their militarization during times of conflict.

Once slow to respond, the world is now acting.

Thirty countries have recently signed up to the Lucens or Safe School guidelines, which instruct their military authorities how to prevent schools from being used as instruments of war.

And, thanks to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, the Global Business Coalition for Education, and former Nigerian Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigeria has now piloted the concept of safe schools.

This has meant funding school guards, fortifications, and surveillance equipment to reassure parents and pupils that everything possible is being done to ensure their school is safe to attend. Now, under Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan is adopting the safe school plan.

What define our views, SPIRITUAL or RELIGIOUS?

Al Mersal Toronto – A comprehensive and in-depth new public opinion poll on Canadian views towards religious belief, faith and multi-faith issues reveals a solid core of Canadians continues to embrace the Christian faith and other religious traditions. To reject religion is not necessarily to be hostile toward religion. But some people would be better described as "bypassing faith".

One of the keys to understanding the current state of organized religion in Canada is to look at immigration patterns. Historically, the life-blood of previously dominant United, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Lutheran denominations was immigration from Britain and Europe. But as immigration patterns have shifted, so too has growth in different religions.

With greater immigration from Asian countries in particular, the greatest increases have been among Roman Catholics, evangelical

Protestants, and other major world faith groups.

Regardless of their religiously ambivalent, 87 per cent of Canadians continue to identify with a religious tradition. A full third say that when they die, they want to have a religious funeral. One-in-three say they "sometimes feel guilty for not being more involved."

Canadians may not be as inclined as they once were to adopt religion as a total package, complete with conventional beliefs, practices, and teachings.

The majority of people across the country nonetheless continue to hold on to religious bits and pieces, picking and choosing from a wide range of items that are available in a lively spiritual and religious marketplace.

There has been little change dating back to at least the 1970s in the inclination of Canadians to raise deep questions about life's purpose, how we experience happiness, why is there suffering in the world and what happens

after death.

Belief in God or a higher power has slipped somewhat since the 1970s when we compare the current survey results with the Bibby, Project Canada Survey Series. Still, more a vast per cent of Canadians today express belief in a "Supreme Being".

What have remained steady are beliefs that we can communicate with the spirit world and with people who have died. What's intriguing is the wide range of beliefs about the supernatural and supernatural phenomena.

People who are ambivalent about religion consistently seem to be open not only to religious beliefs, but to a range of other non-naturalist beliefs, such as psychic phenomena and astrology.

Today, as many Canadians feel they cannot live by rationality alone they opt for a higher power, a gods, chance or luck in the course of understanding their life's path.

Supreme Court rules no praying at city council meetings

Continued from Page 1

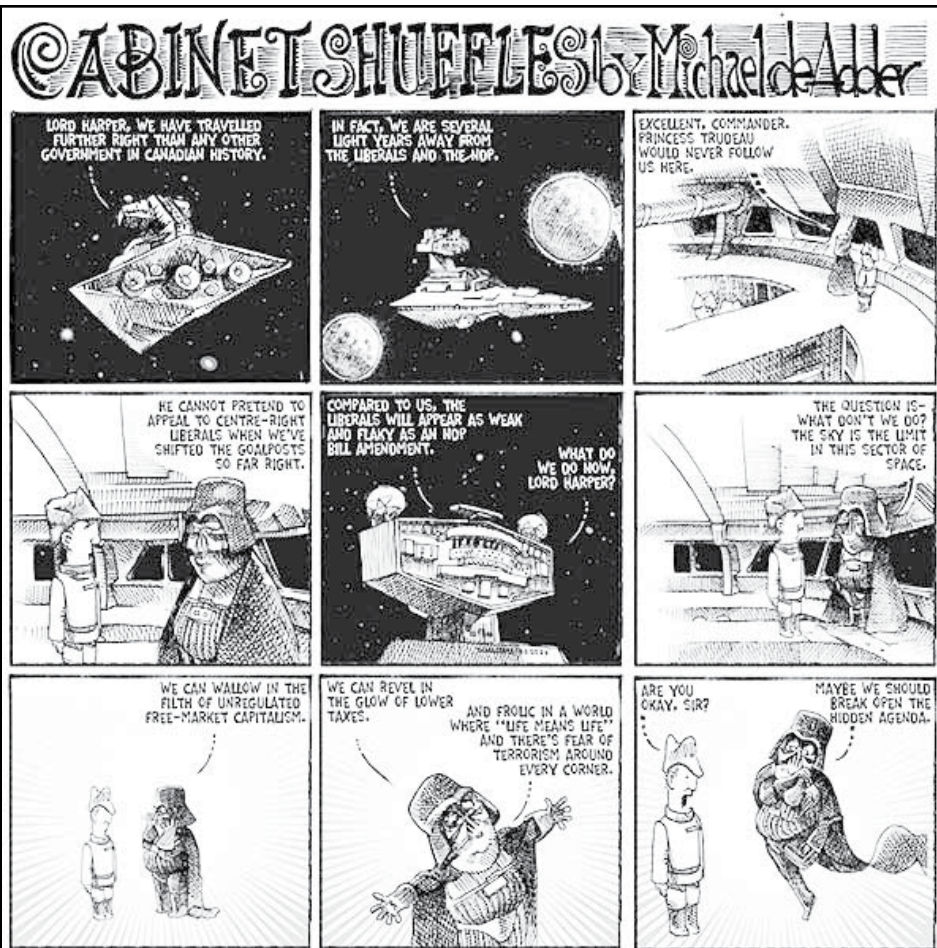
symbols from the chamber, and Simoneau was awarded \$30,000 in damages. But Saguenay Mayor Jean Tremblay, an outspoken Catholic, refused to comply and appealed the decision, stating, reciting prayer respects Quebec's Catholic heritage. In 2013, The Quebec Court of Appeal sided with Tremblay, ruling that prayers don't come into conflict with the moral convictions of residents.

And that the city's neutrality



or democratic process was not undermined by religious symbols. But one group, the Quebec Secular Movement,

challenged the Court of Appeal's decision, and in January 2014 the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.



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MISSISSAUGA

Lebanon's Female Artisans CARRY ON FAMILY TRADITION

By: Maroun Hage:

In the workshop of the Barchini family, science and art collide.

Dana Barchini, 26, and her father Joseph Barchini, 80, both potters and sculptors, work alongside each other, whether it be in the family workspace or testing clay in the Bekaa Valley to be used for their pieces.

Joseph, educated in France at the Ecole des Metiers d'art, returned to Lebanon after also receiving his doctorate at the Sorbonne, where he studied the technical aspects of the ceramics the potters created in his native country, as well as their socio-economic situation.

He returned to Lebanon to use his knowledge to improve the potters' situation and to help modernize their work process.

Joseph opened his first workshop in 1965 in his parents' home in Beirut, but when the civil war began, he had to move north. Now he spends nearly every day in his second workshop he built in Ain Saade

in 1980, a village eight miles north of Beirut, testing different aspects of the pottery craft and creating new glazes through chemical reactions.

"I'm working by myself and learning the whole process.

Now I know how to make my own clay.



I go to the mountains, I make the clay, I love the process.

Because he is a technician, he is teaching me this whole process, but at the same time, I have my own crazy ideas. I'm doing both," Dana said. Dana is

one of the many female artisans in Lebanon who are continuing a patriarchal family tradition from their fathers or grandfathers as their full-time job, despite the growing difficulties of maintaining craftsmanship traditions.

According to Mohammad al-Mouallem, president of the Lebanese Craftsmen Syndicate (LCS), nearly all mediums are in decline in the country and have been greatly affected by several factors, including the drop in tourism, the import of cheaper goods and the lack of government support.

It is decreasing so much. Even in the last 10 years, 7,500 craftsmen have disappeared. Now they're only artisans 200 left. This is a tragedy. Craft survival is not a small but big part of Lebanon. Crafts are the base of culture in the country.

If they lose their craftsmen, they'll lose the identity of Lebanon.

Crafts have been helping families live for centuries.

Sixty shades of graying: Japan's aging population taking over porn industry

Dressed in a kimono and kneeling silently on a tatami mat floor, 61-year-old Yasue Tomita looks as if she might be about to perform a Japanese tea ceremony -- instead she's debuting as a porn actress.

Fluttering her eyelashes demurely as the cameras prepare to roll, Tomita is proof that in Japan's greying society you're never too old to chase your dreams, however racy or unorthodox.

She has also become part of a flourishing niche market in Japan: "silver porn" -- stretching the limits of eroticism among the elderly and overturning social norms in a country where people are expected to grow old gracefully.

Yasue Tomita, 61, makes her debut as a porn actress at a studio in Tsurugashima, Saitama.

Love, too, is not confined to the young, say Japan's growing army of pensioners exploring their desires in more conventional ways, with dating agencies for the elderly reporting increasingly brisk business.

Tomita confessed to being "a bit rusty" but made no apologies for her rambunctious lust for life, or her decision to put aside her knitting and crochet and launch into a career making X-rated movies.

"I like my handicrafts but I wanted to try my hand at this, while my body still works," she told AFP before filming began.

"I do like sex, and this is my last chance before I get too old. I'm very nervous. I wonder if I should really do it, especially in front of so many people, but everyone should follow their dream.

"I just hope I can keep up," added Tomita, who used to work in a factory manufacturing car parts and registered for an agency in Japan's booming "adult video" (AV) industry with her daughter.

"We applied through the Internet together. I got offered a job first, which surprised her a bit."

- Forbidden pleasures - In ageing Japan, around 32 million people -- a quarter of the population -- are 65 or over. Thanks to a low birthrate and growing longevity, that proportion is expected to rise to

40 percent by 2060.

With statistics like that, it's no surprise that geronto-porn is big business.

Adult movies rake in about \$20 billion a year, and those featuring unashamedly wrinkly men and women account for between 20 and 30 percent of that market, industry insiders say. Sales have rocketed over the past decade as more of Japan's perky seniors celebrate their mojo.

Though not for the faint-hearted, the genre took off thanks largely to now-80-year-old Shigeo Tokuda, the twinkling king of granddad porn, who has peeled off for hundreds of hardcore flicks with titles such

as "Forbidden Elderly Care" and "Manic Training of Lolitas."

Pornography became widely available in Japan in the 1900s, with seventeenth century Edo-era woodblock erotic prints being many people's first introduction to the genre.

Attitudes towards sex are less prudish than in other parts of the world and fun-loving fertility festivals, where giant wooden phalluses are joyfully carried around towns, take place annually in parts of Japan.

"Everyone has different sexual tastes or fetishes," said director Fumiaki Kimura. "Elderly porn has become very popular over the past 10 years or so. Older couples watch together because they can feel a connection, a sense of closeness or familiarity, being the same age."

"It's like a forbidden pleasure," he added. "Young people watch it because they're fed up with the regular stuff -- whatever turns you on. You do hear about actors taking Viagra, but that can be dangerous for the older guys."

Tokuda, who beds actresses young enough to be his granddaughter, also co-starred with Fujiko Ito, just two years his junior, the pair frolicking in hot springs or on tatamis with Ito in a kimono.

Natsuko Kayama, 44, a porn

star with 25 years' experience in the industry, told AFP she wanted to outlast the oldest swingers in town.

"I'd love to be the oldest AV actress," she laughed. "I want to break the record if I can -- if I last that long."

- Love, actually - Far away from the steamy film sets, others entering the autumn of their lives are simply interested in finding companionship, perhaps after losing or leaving their first long-term partner.

But with habits set, it isn't always easy to meet someone, and many turn to one of hundreds of matchmaking services catering to older clientele, such as the Ai-Senior company, which boasts a total of 6,000 registered members, some in their 90s.

Later life dating hit the headlines last year with the grisly case of the "Black Widow" -- 68-year-old Chisako Kakehi, who was arrested in November

accused of murdering her septuagenarian fourth husband with cyanide. Placing adverts for an "unattached elderly man with assets", she was said to have amassed millions of dollars in insurance and other payouts over 10 years as a result of the deaths of a string of spouses and lovers.

Most elderly daters, happily, have far more felicitous stories to tell.

Yosuke Komori, 66, and his 57-year-old wife Mutsuko met through another dating agency. Both previously married, they wed four years ago and still hold hands like smitten teenagers.

"I think a healthy sex life is an added bonus of marriage," said Mutsuko, who got married in a daringly short dress, to the horror of her daughters.

"I think perhaps my husband is sufficiently confident in that department. But the most important thing in a relationship is mutual understanding."

For bashful Yosuke, it was never only about the physical side of things.

"I feel most contented when she is happy," he said sheepishly. "I don't want to sound soppy, but I just want to make her smile. What's important is love, actually."

EGYPT Says No to U.S. Wheat

Egypt, which got a U.S. loan agreement, canceled a tender to buy American wheat because the prices were too expensive and then asked for offers from other international suppliers. The failed sale shows how unattractive U.S. grain is to buyers with the dollar near the highest level in more than a decade.

Buyers are instead choosing European wheat as the weakening currency and cheap shipping costs make grain from France and Romania more competitive. Wheat from the region to North Africa costs about \$50 a metric ton less than U.S. supplies, based on data from the International Grains Council.

U.S. wheat futures fell 21 percent since Dec. 18. With little change at \$5.23 a bushel, figures based on the Chicago Board of Trade. Milling wheat in Paris added 0.5 percent to 188.50 euros (\$214.46) a ton on the Euronext.

"U.S. wheat is really too expensive compared to what Egypt can buy in Europe," added Manon Leygue, analyst at ODA UK.

U.S. exporters have sold 20.7 million tons of wheat since the marketing year began June 1, 24 percent less than the same time last season, and according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Japan and Mexico have been the biggest buyers.

Not even a \$100 million credit line could entice the world's biggest wheat buyer to purchase

supplier to GASC tenders in recent months, with sales to Egypt of 840,000 tons since December, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Romania sold 300,000 tons in that time, while Russia and Ukraine provided smaller quantities.

With European prices so cheap, shipments are surging. The EU issued export licenses for 1.67 million tons of wheat in the week through Feb. 3, the highest in data going back to July 2004.

Russia, the world's fourth-biggest wheat exporter, has clamped down on overseas wheat sales as the country struggles with a looming recession and food inflation accelerating at the fastest pace in six years. The country started taxing wheat exports and shipments has plunged 97 percent. "Buyers are going to be a little bit reluctant to go to the Black Sea region and the U.S. is not really price competitive," Amy Reynolds, a senior economist at the IGC in London, said. "The EU at the moment is certainly the origin of choice."

France has been the biggest



Canada considering joining China-led Asian bank

Continued from Page 1

the time needed to ensure it was something Canada would want to join. revealed, Ottawa welcomes thBritain surprised some allies last month in deciding to join the AIIB, was quickly followed by Germany, France and Italy. Washington had urged countries to think twice before signing up to the bank, which it sees as a rival to the U.S.-dominated World Bank.

The United States of America and Japan are the two big holdouts countries who have abstained from joining the AIIB so far.

Earlier reports



stated that China had rejected the request of North Korea; however, the country's Foreign Ministry hasn't confirmed this information, saying that it "doesn't possess any relevant information."

Taiwan has applied for membership in the AIIB

despite the animosity and lack of formal diplomatic relations between the island and continental China. Regarding China, another live issue this year is Beijing's desire to have its yuan included in the basket of currencies that make up the International Monetary Fund's Special Drawing Rights.

The IMF Executive Board would only start discussing this in May of this year.

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RUSSIA eyes IRANIAN arms DEAL after LAUSANNE

Al Mersal Toronto- One of the many unanswered questions surrounding the so-called framework agreement on Iran's nuclear program is whether and how it will limit Russia's arms trade with Iran, A relationship that may become increasingly difficult if the negotiating parties reach a final agreement by their self-imposed June deadline.

In September 2010, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev issued a decree blocking the S-300 sale, as well as other conventional arms sales to Iran.

Medvedev's action followed UN Security Council Resolution 1929, approved in June 2010, banning the sale to Iran of "battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems."

Because Iran had already paid for the S-300s under an \$800 million agreement, Tehran sued Russia's state arms supplier for non-delivery and demanded \$4 billion. In January, official Russian media reported that the two sides had settled their differences after Moscow agreed to provide older Tor surface-to-air missiles with an unspecified date of delivery. Iran's state media also reported a settlement, but without providing details.

At around the same time, reports emerged also that Russia and Iran were again discussing either the S-300 system or a newer system, the Antey-2500.

The US version of the "parameters" that comprise the Lausanne framework agreement includes the statement "all past UN Security Council resolutions on the Iran nuclear issue will be lifted simultaneous with the completion, by Iran, of nuclear-related actions addressing all key concerns." The document adds, however, that "important restrictions on conventional



arms and ballistic missiles" will be re-established in a new resolution. Meanwhile, the joint statement read by European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says only that this new UN resolution will "incorporate certain restrictive measures." Since the Lausanne deal is a general agreement, with precise terms not yet outlined or in some cases agreed to, it is unclear what these differences will

mean in practice.

Indeed, Russia's state-controlled international news agency, Sputnik, has already enthusiastically publicized speculation that the Russian-Iranian arms trade could reach \$11 billion to \$13 billion in the absence of UN sanctions. Russia's principal negotiator, the capable and professional Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, has already on record said, "We think that the arms embargo against Iran should be lifted immediately after agreements are reached."

Nevertheless, lifting current sanctions restricting weapons sales to Iran will require new action by the UN Security Council, meaning that Moscow will not be able to impose its particular vision for their withdrawal. On the contrary, if Washington is prepared to play hardball in the Security Council, the fact that new action is required may shift leverage from Russia and China, which have stalled efforts to impose tougher sanctions on Iran in the past, to the United States and its allies, which are now in a position to block attempts to lift sanctions that they believe go too far. This reality has led some Russian hard-liners to view statements like Ryabkov's as a political fig leaf trying to cover the reality that limits on arms might remain in place for quite some time.

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Public Notice

Changes to MI WAY Fares Effective April 27, 2015:

Fare Category	New Fare: Effective April 27, 2015	Increase/Change to Fare
Cash Fare	\$3.50	25 cent increase
Adult Ticket	\$2.90	10 cent increase
Adult - PRESTO	\$2.90	10 cent increase
Adult Monthly Pass	\$125/month	\$5 increase/mth
High School Student - Ticket	Fare category will apply to students between age 13 and 19.	
High School Student Monthly Pass	The high school student monthly pass will be discontinued effective July 1, 2015.	
Post-Secondary Student - PRESTO ePurse	\$2.65	20 cent increase
Child Ticket	Fare category will apply to children between age 6 and 12.	
Senior Ticket	\$1.90	Five cent increase
Senior - PRESTO	\$1.90	Five cent increase
Senior Monthly Pass	\$57/month	\$4 increase/mth
Senior Annual Pass	The senior annual pass will be discontinued effective January 1, 2016.	
GO Transit Co-Fare	\$0.80	5 cent increase

Fare Change Background

- To continue to encourage a transition to PRESTO as a method of payment, the cash fare will increase to \$3.50.
- There is no change to high school student and child fares. Rates will be frozen at the 2009 rate.
- The high school student ticket will now apply to students between the age of 13 and 19 to bring consistency to student fares across the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA).
- The high school student monthly pass will be discontinued effective July 1, 2015.
- The child ticket will now apply to children between the age of six and 12 to bring consistency to child fares across the GTHA.
- The senior annual pass will be discontinued effective January 1, 2016.

PRESTO card

Riders will now have more options to load PRESTO cards. In addition to the City Centre Transit Terminal, Islington Subway and GO Transit stations, customers can now load PRESTO cards at all community centres with the exception of Meadowvale Community Centre which is closed for renovations and Rivergrove Community Centre, expected to have the service soon. For more information on MiWay bus fares visit miway.ca/busfares.



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CANADA PLEDGES A BALANCED BUDGET ON APRIL 21

AL Mersal Toronto: - Canadian Finance Minister Joe Oliver promised on to deliver a balanced budget on April 21 despite the economic damage inflicted by low oil prices, and pledged to avoid what he called tax-and-spend plans that could damage the fragile recovery.

The finance minister normally unveils the budget in February or March, ahead of the April 1, start of the fiscal year, but Oliver put it off to have a better sense of where oil prices would end up and their effect on the economy and the budget.

Canada is a major oil producer and exporter, and the price crash is leading to what Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz estimates is a 3 percent cut to national income, with concomitant hits on federal revenues.

The budget will set the tone for the Conservative government's bid to win reelection in October, and Oliver spent some time attacking the economic plans of the opposition Liberal and

(NDP) New Democratic parties. "They plan massive taxes and even bigger hikes in spending, a tax-and-spend agenda that Canadians simply cannot afford, a risk our country should not assume and a debt burden our children should not bear," he said.



Finance Minister Joe Oliver

The Conservatives have run seven years of deficits in the wake of the recession, and Oliver rejected a reporter's suggestion that he provide

further economic stimulus measures.

"We're not looking at a budget that will be cutting, we're looking at a budget that will be providing benefits to Canadians and encouraging more job growth," he said. "We do not, however, need the kind of stimulus (such as in) a budget we had during the Great Recession because we're not in a recession now."

The oil revenue decline and a set of sweeping family tax cuts already announced mean the government will not have a lot of money to play with, but it is still expected to boost spending on police and security agencies with the aim of combating terrorism.

The cramped finances also limit room for maneuver for the opposition parties unless they want to campaign on either increasing taxes or returning to budget deficits.

They have said already they will rescind a C\$1.9 billion (\$1.5 billion) a year tax cut for families with single incomes.

Say NO to Radical Sex ED CURRICULUM...?

Premier Kathleen Wynne was in Mississauga hosting a meet and greets for ethnic members of the media at Verdi Banquet Hall and briefly addressed the concerns of a few hundred protesters worried about the changes to the Ontario's sex education syllabus.

"We recognize that the world is a very different place than it was 17 years ago when we last revised this portion of the elementary curriculum," said Wynne.

"We know that children have access to information through



smart phones and social media, much of it inaccurate. They have access to information they did not have in 1998."

Wynne also said that curriculums developed in other

countries is very similar and has been effective in lowering rates of teen pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections among teens.

"We consulted with parents, teachers, students, medical professionals and curriculum experts about how to update this curriculum.

This was the biggest curriculum consultation in Ontario's history," Premier Wynne added.



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October 19 election 'very likely' most expensive in Canadian history, say political insiders

Al Mersal Toronto- The Oct. 19 federal election is expected to be the most expensive in Canada's political history because, for the first time, the election date is known and pre-election spending will be big, say strategists, and third-party organizations.



Stephen Harper

In the last election, according to Elections Canada, The spending cap for the major national parties was around \$21-million.

Already, the Conservatives and Liberals have been running ads either against each other or to promote their own party's policies or achievements.



Justin Trudeau

Since Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau became party leader in 2013, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives have been running attack ads on and off to try to define Trudeau.

And have been running ads to promote programs such as Canada's Economic Action Plan.

And the Liberal Party is currently running ads promoting

its party policies in Quebec.

"If third parties take a leaf out of our book, then it could be informative and helpful advertising.

If they decide to go negative



Green Party Leader Elizabeth May

and follow the way Mr. Harper's party runs ads, we can find ourselves in a toxic swamp," said Green Party leader Elizabeth May.

"We don't want to move in the direction of the United States where people just tune out because there's too much noise and too much partisanship," Ms. May said.

For third parties, the advertising spending cap for the next election is \$4,116 per riding, or \$203,800 for the national campaign.

Elections Canada requires



Kathleen Wynne

third parties to register if they spend \$500 or more during the writ period.

Last year's Ontario provincial election drew a lot of media attention in which third-party advertisers spent about \$8.5-million.

Former Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak suffered the most damage from the union advertisements because of his campaign pledge to eliminate 100,000 public service jobs.

The provincial Liberals, led



Tim Hudak

by Kathleen Wynne, reaped the benefits of this game-changing controversy and won an unexpected majority government.

Peter Coleman, president and CEO of National Citizens Coalition, a conservative lobby group, said that his organization has plans to run ads using social media and on radio, both pre-writ and post-writ. But he said his organization is still trying to



Peter Coleman

figure out when to run the pre-writ ads because in the summer months most Canadians are tuned out of politics.

Mr. Coleman did not reveal the cost of his campaign.

Coleman said. "Most people don't like politics, at the best of times, and they're not going to pay attention to the ads in the summer time."

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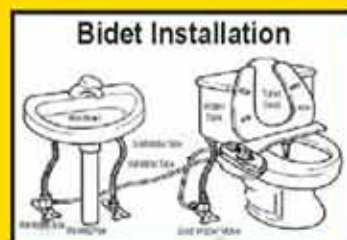


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will take place
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The Parapan American Games
will take place
August 7-15.

**Pan Am
TORONTO
2015**



The race routes will require road closures at certain times from July 15 to 22 and August 12 to 13 on Louis St. Laurent Avenue and nearby streets, as well as detours for some Milton Transit routes.

On Wednesday, July 22, the Pan Am riders will race on Louis St. Laurent Avenue, Bronte Street/First Line, Lower Baseline and Fourth Line.

On Thursday, August 13, the Parapan Am riders will race along Louis St. Laurent

Avenue, Regional Road 25, Britannia Road and Fourth Line. Depending on their classification, some riders will complete one lap, while others will complete two.

Businesses in this area will be able to stay open during the Games; however, customers are encouraged to plan ahead and allow for more travel time as it may take longer to reach their destination and, in some cases, routes will change at Games time.



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FLYING INTO GARDENING SEASON



Fertilize Trees

Early spring is a good time to fertilize trees that have shown poor growth or have pale leaves. Spread slow release fertilizer with a balance of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium outside the drip line of the tree.

With their great beauty, tremendous variety, and luscious scent, it's easy to become passionate about those all-time favourites, roses. For many, roses are the symbol of a well-cared-for home, evoking images of that picket-fenced cottage awash with rambling roses. Like Oscar Wilde, who could "resist anything except temptation," those who give in to the temptation of roses are richly rewarded. In addition to being beautiful flowers for arrangements, roses lend themselves to a wide variety of crafts, providing everything from petals for creating potpourri, to the vitamin C-rich seed pods (called rose hips) for rose hip tea.

If you decide to plant a rose garden, do it with the understanding that, as with all temptations, there will be a price to pay. To do what they do so well--namely, produce quantities of beautiful, fragrant flowers--roses need special attention.

Ten to 12 rose bushes will make a magnificent display, provide plenty of flowers for cutting, and require a bed only 8 feet by 12 feet or so. Any shape of bed will do, but generations of gardeners have favoured the formal look of square, rectangular, or round beds, edged with stone or brick, often with a birdbath or

sundial placed in the Center for a little added interest.

When choosing roses, always favour those adapted to your growing region. The selection process is a very important step in the creation of a successful rose garden. By choosing naturally vigorous roses, very willing to grow in your area, you will dramatically decrease the amount of care they require.

Roses require a location that's sunny at least six hours a day. Ideally, the location



should provide good air circulation and receive morning sun to help dry off leaves early in the day. Too much shade encourages disease problems. If the shade is produced by mature trees, their extensive root systems will rob nutrients from the roses, a situation that results in few flowers and weak plants. And if there are youngsters in your household, take care to locate the rose bed where an errant football or Frisbee isn't likely to wreak havoc.

Roses are rather finicky about soil; it's a good idea to

have your soil tested. Once the soil analysis is complete, you will know exactly what should be added to the soil and in what amount.

Roses need regular applications of water for top production of flowers. It makes no difference whether the water comes from a hose or from rain. Just make sure the roses receive enough water to moisten the soil to a depth of 18 inches every week during the growing season. The easiest way to check this is with a long screwdriver or stiff piece of wire, such as a straightened-out coat hanger. In arid summer climates, consider watering your roses with a drip system that is connected to a timer.

At least two applications of fertilizer should be made, once when new growth first starts in the spring and again in midseason. Favour non-burning, natural formulations that feed the soil as well as the plant.

There are effective natural controls for virtually every pest known to plague roses. If you know of diseases that are a problem in your area (such as black spot, rust, and mildew), use a natural fungicide to combat the problem before it occurs.

Roses are not just for the grand formal gardens. They have a place in every garden.

When to Plant Vegetables

By keeping one eye on the signals nature is sending, you can plant your vegetable garden according to nature's calendar.

If you live where crocus are common, you can time your seed sowing to their bloom: When you see the flowers, plant the following as seeds outside in your garden: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, onion sets and seeds, peas, potatoes, radish, rutabaga, shallots, spinach, and turnip. These early plants may be ready to go in while your garden is still cold and wet, before the soil is ready to be worked.

One way to tell is to step



onto the bare garden soil. If your footprint looks wet and shiny, wait. Another way to test is to squeeze a handful of soil into a ball and set it on ground. Poke it with your finger. If it crumbles, it's okay to plant. If it clings together in a hard ball, wait.

When tulips, daffodils, and

maple trees blossom, you can plant beets and Swiss chard by seed. They can take a light frost or two, but not as much as the crops listed above.

When apple trees, lilacs, and late tulips are in bloom, you can plant the following seeds: bush beans, sweet corn, pumpkin, and squash. These crops like summer heat, but can germinate and grow in relatively cool soils.

When the tall, bearded iris bloom and apple blossoms have fallen and summer has arrived, plant seeds outdoors for pole beans, lima beans, cantaloupes, cucumbers, eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes. These are the true heat lovers.



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