

A SUNDANCE SUCCESS STORY

Montrealer's short
film follows newly
arrived immigrant **A3**



DYNAMIC DUO A DRIVING FORCE

Caufield and Dobes
propelled Habs in
January: Todd **NP9**



The Gazette

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Son-in-law of
Mob boss nabbed
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City opens
second modular
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students still
face 33% hike **A4**

ANALYSIS

A crucial test for Quebec constitution

Jolin-Barrette's project back under study
amid criticism and signs of CAQ division

ANDY RIGA

Simon Jolin-Barrette stepped aside from the race to succeed Premier François Legault, citing both family reasons and his commitment to push forward a written Quebec constitution.

This week, the justice minister's project — Bill 1 (Quebec Constitution Act, 2025) — faces a critical test as it returns to public hearings amid controversy and signs of a division within his own party.

The proposed constitution is a sweeping bill touching multiple laws and affecting everything from the hierarchy of rights to the

powers of unions and the independence of public institutions.

The proposal was tabled before Legault announced he would not seek a third term. At the time, the premier framed the constitution as a legacy project meant to affirm "the constitutional existence of the Quebec nation" and "become the law of all laws."

Hailed by groups that promote the French language and secularism, the bill has been decried by opponents as an undemocratic power grab by a government so unpopular it could be wiped off the map in the October election.

Critics argue that it would strip

away minority and human rights, concentrate excessive power in the hands of the government, and undermine the ability of citizens and organizations to challenge laws that infringe on Quebecers' rights.

The Barreau du Québec, the province's lawyers' order, went so far as to say the plan is part of a "drift towards authoritarianism" that threatens the rule of law. A lawyers' group that promotes human rights and the rule of law has asked the United Nations to intervene.

Opposition parties want nothing to do with the bill.

The Coalition Avenir Québec holds a majority, meaning the party could force it through on its own.

Without backing from other parties, however, the legitimacy of a constitution could be in doubt —

especially with the CAQ lagging in the polls, Legault a lame duck, a new premier yet to be chosen, and Quebecers just months from going to the polls.

With a rigid, no-nonsense style, Jolin-Barrette has long been a lightning rod for CAQ critics, ranging from anglophone groups to union federations.

Last week, a union leader lambasting the minister's constitutional plan set off a controversy by referring to him as "p'tit crisse" — a vulgar Québécois insult derived from "Christ," roughly meaning "little bastard."

The minister fired back. "Insults only discredit the person who utters them," he said, emphasizing his commitment to "calm, constructive debates."

SEE CONSTITUTION ON **A4**



PIERRE OBENDRAUF

GIFT FROM A GROUNDHOG

Taylor Murray basks in the sun at Place D'Youville yesterday, shortly after Fred la marmotte predicted Quebecers will enjoy an early spring. Those who heed human meteorologists will be dismayed to see the forecast calls for more double-digit deep freezes, with temperatures plunging to -15 C by Saturday. **A5**

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More must be done to put a stop to femicides



ALLISON HANES

January was an atrocious month for violence against women in Quebec.

No fewer than five femicides took place in the province, the first on New Year's Day.

It's a chilling toll that portends an ominous year for a scourge as old as time, but one that people are increasingly aware of, that society is finally starting to name, and that authorities are redou-

bling efforts to address.

The tragedies of the past month underscore how much work is left to be done. Behind these shocking statistics are names, faces, lives, mothers, daughters, sisters — human beings — who were loved and are missed.

TADJAN'AH DESIR

The first to be killed was Tadjan'ah Desir on Jan. 1. Witnesses watched in horror as she was allegedly pushed from a third-floor balcony in the Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough. Police and ambulance technicians arrived to find her unconscious and gravely injured on the sidewalk. She died later in a hospital. Charged with man-

slaughter in her death is James Theramene, a man her grieving mother told media at the Montreal courthouse was Desir's ex.

MARY IQIQUQ TUKALAK

On Jan. 5, the children of Mary Iqiquq Tukalak in the northern Quebec community of Puvirnituq arrived at their parents' home to find their mother dead on the kitchen floor and their father in the bedroom with a gun. The son managed to disarm his father and fled with his sister to a neighbour's home to call police. But the father took his own life with another gun before officers arrived, in what was determined to be a murder-suicide.

SEE HANES ON **A2**

NP

CANADA

Tories plot
next steps after
leadership
review **NP1**

WORLD

Israel reopens
Gaza-Egypt
border **NP3**