

# Office space

Employers 'left playing catch-up' as workplace vacancy rates drop **B1**

# All-star adieu

Hall of Famer Glenn Hall, 'Mr. Goalie,' dies at 94 **B6**



PROUDLY CANADIAN OWNED SINCE 1892

# TORONTO STAR

WEATHER HIGH 3 C | MIX OF SUN AND CLOUDS | **MAP A16**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2026

## TRADE

## Carney heading to China to repair relations

Prime minister says 'work to be done' on tariff dispute

**TONDA MACCHARLES**  
OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

OTTAWA Prime Minister Mark Carney heads to China next week on a "complicated" trade diversification mission before travelling to the Middle East and to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland to target more global investors.

The trip is a high-stakes effort to rebuild Canada-China relations, which collapsed in 2018 during the first term of U.S. President Donald Trump only to barely warm later to a deep chill amid allegations of Chinese foreign interference and unfair trade practices.

The Prime Minister's Office said Wednesday that Carney will depart Jan. 13 and plans to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and other government and business leaders, with the primary objective "to elevate engagement on trade, energy, agriculture and international security."

The trip comes as Canadian agriculture producers grapple with Chinese counter-tariffs on canola and canola oil, pork and seafood exports that Beijing imposed after Ottawa matched American tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles and steel and aluminum.

Carney's visit will be the first to China by a Canadian prime minister since Justin Trudeau travelled there in 2017.

That was when the Liberals dreamed of free trade negotiations with China. A year later, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were detained after Canada co-operated with the U.S. in the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou during Trump's first presidential term, which was marked by his aggressive pushback against China on trade.

It was only in 2021, after the U.S. struck a deal on the Huawei prosecution and the "two Michaels" were

**SEE CHINA, A10**

## The recycling blues

Ford's new system suffers growing pains beyond bin collection failures



ARLYN MCADOREY/TORONTO STAR

Recycling bins get emptied on Indian Road Wednesday while many have remained uncollected under new system.

**DAVID RIDER**  
SENIOR POLITICS REPORTER

The Ford government's new industry-run recycling system is suffering growing pains beyond the many blue bins languishing uncollected since last week.

Key players are pointing fingers at each other for the ongoing collection failure in pockets of Toronto and giving the public conflicting, sometimes inaccurate information.

The problems, serious enough to prompt a warning this week from Premier Doug Ford that he'll intervene if necessary, now have a city official demanding that Circular Materials take residents' recycling queries around the clock — as the city previously did — and CUPE Local 416 urging Ford to let Toronto revert to city-run recycling.

Circular Materials, a national non-profit funded by McDonald's, Costco and other businesses re-

sponsible for packaging, is in charge of running recycling in Ontario and hired Green for Life Environmental to collect curbside recycling across Toronto.

Coun. Paula Fletcher, chair of the city's infrastructure and environment committee, told the Star on Wednesday: "Last fall, the head of Circular Materials came to our committee and said the (new system's) rollout would be great and that's not what we're seeing at all.

"Instead, we're in a Franz Kafka novel, where they're all pointing the finger of blame at one another, nobody's answering the phone when residents call to complain, and homeowners are getting very frustrated," Fletcher said. "People used to get terrific (recycling) service from the City of Toronto ... At the very least, Circular Materials should have a 24-hour response line like the city's 3-1-1 service."

**SEE RECYCLING, A13**

**Key players are pointing fingers at each other for the ongoing collection failure in pockets of Toronto**

## CITY HALL

## Property taxes to increase by 2.2%

Chow to unveil hike in wake of operating shortfall

**MAHDIS HABIBINIA AND BEN SPURR**  
CITY HALL BUREAU

Mayor Olivia Chow has revealed Toronto homeowners will face a 2.2 per cent property tax increase this year, a modest pre-election hike that comes even as the city confronts a billion-dollar shortfall and rising costs across major services.

Chow says the increase, which is far lower than hikes in the past two years and less than what many insiders had expected, is intended to keep life affordable.

But it has already prompted accusations of creative accounting from some councillors, who say key details of how the budget will be balanced remain unclear.

Although the city wasn't set to officially launch the annual spending plan until Thursday, a statement from the mayor's office on Wednesday said it will include a 0.7 per cent hike to the residential property tax

**SEE BUDGET, A3**

## CRIME

## 'He was there to kill somebody'

Police believe U of T student randomly targeted in shooting

**JAMES BULLANOFF AND JOSH MCGINNIS**  
STAFF REPORTERS

A man who shot and killed a 20-year-old student on a trail on the University of Toronto Scarborough campus last month randomly targeted his victim and was on the school grounds that day "to kill someone," police said.

Why or how he chose the victim is not clear, police told reporters in an update on Wednesday.

On Dec. 23, just after 3:30 p.m., police responded to the area of Highland Creek Trail and Old Kingston Road after reports of a shooting. When officers arrived, they located Shivank Avasthi suffering from gunshot wounds on a popular walking trail used by students, staff and members of the community referred to as "The Valley," according to police.

He was pronounced dead at the scene. Police said the suspect fled the area before officers arrived.

On Wednesday, police said they have charged Babatunde Afuwape, 28, with first-degree murder. Afuwape was on parole for firearm offences at the time of the shooting.

Toronto police Det.-Sgt. Stacey McCabe said at a press conference.

He was arrested for a parole violation on Dec. 28, she added.

McCabe said police do not believe the accused and the victim were known to each other and they're still investigating a motive.

**SEE SHOOTING, A11**

FULL INDEX

**A2**

ONO

8

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

7

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