

St. Clair arrests

Two face charges in shooting at street festival, police say **A2**

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Argos win BMO Field opener after seven games on road **S1**

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TORONTO STAR

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Ottawa restores coverage for some refugees

Move comes after advocates sounded alarm about cuts

RAISA PATEL
OTTAWA BUREAU

OTTAWA The Carney government has quietly walked back some of its cuts to a program providing temporary health-care coverage to refugees and asylum-seekers, months after slashing benefits for some of Canada’s most vulnerable newcomers.

Earlier this year, following a budget pledge to lower funding, Ottawa introduced changes to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), which provides health care to resettled refugees and asylum claimants who are waiting to qualify for provincial or territorial insurance.

Beginning in May, most people eligible for the program were required to pay 30 per cent of costs for health services, assistive devices and medical supplies that had previously been covered, along with \$4 for prescription medication and refills.

But last week, Medavie Blue Cross, the program’s insurance provider, contacted health professionals with an update: items and services like feeding supplies, respiratory devices, implantable hearing aids, nursing homes and hospital-based rehabilitation would be moved to a different coverage tier, where co-payments would be scrapped entirely.

“We welcome any improvements in this situation because these co-payments were posing insurmountable financial barriers to patients who need this care,” said Dr. Vanessa Redditt, a family physician who primarily works with newcomer and low-income patients in Toronto.

SEE COVERAGE, A11

‘It brings people back’

Greektown welcomes Taste of the Danforth revival after years of uncertainty



SOPHIE BOUQUILLON/TORONTO STAR

Angeliki Laiou is excited for the street festival’s return after opening her restaurant, Horio Taverna, just two weeks ago.

SHEILA REID
STAFF REPORTER

Years of cancelled festivals, budget shortfalls and encroaching corporate vendors nearly strained Taste of the Danforth to the point of extinction.

But dedicated organizers and volunteers — along with half a million dollars in government seed funding — have revived Canada’s largest street festival after its hiatus since 2023.

Even as security concerns and costs loom in the aftermath of the shooting at Salsa on St. Clair last month, organizers promise safety, good food and fresh entertainment, making it clear this is not the festival of years past.

Jim Tsafatinos, part owner of Kalyvia on the Danforth, has been part of Taste from the beginning and welcomes its return this weekend.

“It brings people back to the Dan-

forth,” said Tsafatinos. “It lets them know we still exist.”

Newcomer Angeliki Laiou opened her restaurant, Horio Taverna, just two weeks ago — and was already making plans to participate.

“This is going to be very important for us not only for the money we’re going to make this weekend, but our exposure,” she said.

Taste’s rebirth took a team of seasoned veterans, including the return of former festival lead Howard Lichtman, who quit and sued the Business Improvement Association (BIA) in 2021 for unpaid wages.

The festival was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, returning in 2023, running more than \$300,000 over budget and losing \$257,000, the BIA said.

“A large group of the (GreekTown on the Danforth BIA) wanted to see Taste back, but with fiscal responsibility,” said BIA chair Tony Pethakas.

SEE DANFORTH, A11

The festival — backed by funding from all three levels of government — returns this weekend for the first time since 2023. At its peak in 2018, an estimated 1.6 million people attended

Concerns raised over funding for rentals

Bulk of \$2.7 billion pledged by feds goes to developer loans

MAY WARREN
HOUSING REPORTER

When Prime Minister Mark Carney announced Wednesday that his government is providing \$2.7 billion in funding to build more rental housing in Toronto, his emphasis was mainly on the benefits for residents. But concern is growing that roughly two-thirds of the money is going to loans for private developers.

Bruno Dobrusin, co-chair of the Toronto Tenant Union, calls this “highly problematic.”

“I think it’s part of a continuing bailout that the developers are getting,” in addition to the HST rebate on new homes and development charges relief, he said.

Carney, speaking at a co-op housing site with Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow, pledged \$319 million for nine projects to be delivered through the new Build Canada Homes federal agency, for a total of nearly 1,900 homes on city land. More than 700 will be affordable (meaning the rent will be less than 30 per cent of the before-tax income for residents).

SEE FUNDING, A6

Two charged in July consulate shooting

Suspects, including a 15-year-old, allegedly linked to gun-for-hire network

ABBY O'BRIEN
AND DANIAH YAQOOB
STAFF REPORTERS

Toronto police have arrested two teens, including a 15-year-old boy, in connection with a shooting at the U.S. Consulate downtown in July — the second attack on the building that investigators have tied to a gun-for-hire network.

A single shot was fired into the University Avenue building just before 5 a.m. on July 27, according to police. Investigators believe the suspects were travelling in a white Honda Accord without licence plates at the time of the shooting.

“I said at that time that our pursuit of those responsible will be relentless,” Chief Myron Demkiw

told reporters on Thursday. “And I’m pleased to say that through the hard work of our investigators, we had one suspect in custody this past Saturday (and) the second suspect was arrested yesterday.”

The July shooting came about five months after the consulate was first targeted by gunfire, an incident that investigators linked to what they described as a sprawling gun-for-hire network. On Thursday, Demkiw said he felt the same tactics were used in the July incident.

“We believe that the modus operandi in this investigation is consistent with what we saw in the previous U.S. Consulate shooting, and that is criminals for hire,” said Demkiw.

SEE CONSULATE, A3



R.J. JOHNSTON/TORONTO STAR

Toronto police investigate after a shooting on July 27 at the U.S. Consulate on University Avenue.

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