

Done deal

Raptors lock up Leonard with two-year, \$115M extension **A15**

Tire change

Province boosts recycling target after chaotic year for industry **B1**

LOTTO

649

NEXT

GOLD BALL JACKPOT

\$10 MILLION

OR THE GUARANTEED \$1 MILLION

Play Smart

PROUDLY CANADIAN OWNED SINCE 1892

TORONTO STAR

WEATHER HIGH 17 C | MAINLY SUNNY | MAP A19 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

PARLIAMENT HILL

We have mandate to build faster, PM says

Carney defends sweeping legislation to speed up projects as criticism mounts

RAISA PATEL AND ALEX BALLINGALL OTTAWA BUREAU

OTTAWA Facing pushback from Indigenous, environment and labour groups over his agenda to speed up development, Prime Minister Mark Carney insisted Tuesday that his government has a clear mandate to remove regulatory “restrictions” he blamed for strangling construction of major projects in recent decades.

The prime minister made his defence one day after his Liberal government tabled new legislation meant to reduce work stoppages in federally regulated industries and simplify environmental assessments so that project reviews can be conducted within a single year.

That legislation, Bill C-39, follows recent moves to sell off the operation of Canada’s four largest airports — including Toronto’s Pearson — to private investors, as well as a law enacted last year that’s meant to fast-track major projects like oil pipelines, ports and nuclear power generation.

All of those decisions have faced opposition, including from environmental groups concerned about watered-down regulations, unions who worry workers’ ability to go on strike is being hampered, and Indigenous leaders who want to ensure nations are consulted about what happens on their territory.

Speaking on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Tuesday, Carney said his government was elected last year on a clear platform to build major projects faster — and that now is the time to seize “opportunities” for economic growth as Canada faces the crisis of a trade war with the United States.

SEE CARNEY, A4

TWO WORLD VISIONS ON DISPLAY AT UNITED NATIONS **DELACOURT A4**

Traffic driving people away

Poll finds a third of Toronto residents say they may leave the city within the next five years — and our notorious gridlock is a big reason why **A8**



SOPHIE BOUQUILLON/TORONTO STAR

Of the 37 per cent of Torontonians who say they are very or somewhat likely to leave the city in the next five years, traffic was the second most common reason after affordability, according to a new Ipsos poll of 1,006 residents.

MAYORAL RACE 2026

Leading candidates clash on key issues facing city

Bradford challenged on vow to freeze property taxes

MAHDIS HABIBINIA CITY HALL BUREAU

The three leading candidates to be the mayor of Toronto clashed over property taxes, the affordability crisis and city finances Tuesday night in a hotly contested debate.

Incumbent Olivia Chow, Coun. Brad Bradford and former federal cabinet minister Chris Alexander squared off for an hour in front of a lively crowd at the Isabel Bader Theatre downtown in the second debate among the three.

The event was hosted by the Toronto Star and the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

“We’ve benefited from decades

of fast-growing population, and our economy has flatlined,” said Giles Gherson, president and CEO of the board, in his opening remarks.

“We’re losing ground, and we can’t afford to. To top it off, we are now thrust into a spiralling trade war. Perhaps no region in Canada is more exposed to a tariff storm than Toronto.”

While debating the city budget, Bradford revealed — for the first time — what his tax rate would look like, at least for the first year.

“I am going to freeze your property taxes for the first year,” Bradford said.

SEE DEBATE, A8

Finances and affordability were in focus at the event hosted by the Star and the Toronto Region Board of Trade

PROJECT SOUTH

Documents allege plot to smuggle cannabis at Pearson

Accused linked to officer at heart of corruption scandal

JENNIFER PAGLIARO AND ABBY O’BRIEN STAFF REPORTERS

For months, officers had been covertly stationed outside the flat, red-brick plaza on Ordan Drive in Mississauga, just a short drive from Toronto Pearson airport, listening in on the conversations inside.

Investigators believed Unit D of the building was being used as a staging ground for mass amounts of cannabis; a final stop for the drugs to be packed into suitcases affixed with GPS trackers before they were smuggled through Pearson to international destinations such as Greece.

On an afternoon in mid-January, police allege a microphone hidden inside the unit captured their target — Brian Da Costa — telling an unknown individual that Air Canada was “live” at Pearson and that he had negotiated a flat rate of \$14,000.

Two weeks later, Da Costa was arrested inside the unit, where police say they seized nearly 170 kilograms of cannabis.

SEE PEARSON, A3

GRAND THEFT TORONTO LAST OF FIVE PARTS

Auto theft kingpins elude capture

Why it’s so difficult for police to catch bosses calling the shots

KEVIN DONOVAN CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER

The hunt for the elusive Mr. Big is on. Make that Mr. *Bigs*.

Police across Toronto and the GTA have task forces with catchy names, like Project Joker, Poacher, Vector and Chickadee. Ontario has poured millions of dollars into boosting enforcement. Hundreds of undercover officers have

nabbed hundreds of thieves as young as 11 years old for all kinds of car theft, from simple driveway jobs to violent home invasions and even more violent carjackings. Special prosecutors have been assigned in an attempt to make charges stick.

The cars stolen in Canada are either shipped to West Africa or the Middle East, or their identity — their VIN — is changed, and they

are resold in Canada. Some of the cars stolen from Canada are even showing up on the streets of Russia, where Western export bans have created a ravenous demand for new cars.

It’s true that car theft rates that spiked during the pandemic have receded, but they are still much higher than pre-2020. It’s the new normal, investigators say.

SEE THEFT, A10

FULL INDEX A2 ONO

