



HAPPY HISPANIC LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Canadian Hispanic Congress

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***Celebrating the 40th anniversary of
the Canadian Hispanic Congress***

Canada's Affordable Housing and Groceries Act: Tackling the Crisis

The Canadian government has introduced the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act (Bill C-56) to tackle the housing crisis and rising grocery prices. This legislation eliminates the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on new rental housing construction, encouraging the development of purpose-built rental units.

Previously, developers had to absorb the GST cost themselves, making rental projects financially unsustainable. The full GST rebate for new rental developments is expected to make apartment construction economically viable and increase the availability of affordable rental units. The Act also enhances competition in the grocery sector by empowering the Competition Bureau to investigate unfair practices.



Dream Unlimited Corp., a Toronto-based real estate company, plans to build 5,000 new rental units across Canada in response to the GST elimination. This move is expected to revitalize stalled projects and make rental housing more accessible. Dream Unlimited Corp. is collaborating with the Multifaith Housing Initiative in Ottawa to provide affordable housing units, showcasing a novel partnership between non-profit and for-profit organizations. The government is considering further measures to stimulate purpose-built rental developments, including simplifying approval processes and providing tax incentives.

The Housing Accelerator Fund, a multi-billion-dollar program, aims to fast-track the construction of affordable housing units across Canada by removing bureaucratic obstacles. Overall, the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act represents significant progress in making life more affordable for Canadians by stimulating rental housing construction and enhancing grocery sector competition.



Advocates Raise Concerns Over Proposed Bylaw Criminalizing Homelessness in Barrie, Ontario



A coalition of advocacy organizations is raising concerns about a proposed bylaw in Barrie, Ontario, that could have criminalized efforts to help homeless people. The bylaw amendments would have made it illegal for individuals and charitable groups to distribute food, clothing, tents, and tarps to unhoused individuals on public property. While the city initially proposed these amendments and then later walked them back, advocates are sending the proposal to the United Nations (UN) for examination as an example of policies that criminalize homelessness in Canada. The UN is collecting data on laws impacting unhoused people for a report on decriminalizing homelessness.

The coalition, including the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition and Pivot Legal Society, contends that the proposed bylaw still raises concerns despite the city's backtrack. They argue that the city needs to do more to prove its commitment to addressing homelessness. Barrie's mayor maintains that the intent was not to deter acts of kindness, but advocacy groups are calling for the amendments to be rescinded entirely.

The proposed bylaws had sparked controversy and protests in Barrie, with concerns that they would hinder efforts to support unhoused individuals. The mayor stated that the proposed amendments were no longer needed after a local not-for-profit organization decided to relocate its outreach program away from the waterfront. However, advocates remain vigilant and are monitoring the situation to ensure that the rights and dignity of homeless individuals are protected.



New Moderna Vaccine Authorized in Canada to Tackle Omicron Subvariant

Health Canada has granted authorization for the Moderna SPIKEVAX™ COVID-19 vaccine to target the Omicron XBB.1.5 subvariant for individuals aged six months and older. The approval comes after a comprehensive review of safety, efficacy, and quality criteria. The vaccine recommendation includes one dose for individuals aged five and older, regardless of prior vaccination history, while children between six months and four years should receive two doses if unvaccinated or one dose if previously vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines.



The authorization aligns with rising COVID-19 infections in Canada, urging people to get both COVID-19 vaccines and flu shots. Health officials emphasize the importance of getting the new Moderna vaccine, which specifically targets the XBB.1.5 Omicron subvariant. Other updated COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Novavax are also under review. These vaccines are designed to provide enhanced protection against the evolving subvariants, offering both temporary and longer-lasting defense against severe illness.

Additionally, it is recommended to get the updated vaccine even if individuals had COVID-19 or received prior vaccines, as immunity wanes over time. Getting both the COVID-19 booster and flu shot simultaneously is deemed safe and convenient, with the shots expected to be available across Canada in October. Vulnerable populations, such as seniors in long-term care and retirement homes, are prioritized for vaccination.

Canada's Fight for Menstrual Equity: Food Banks Canada Takes the Lead



Food Banks Canada has been chosen to lead a national pilot project addressing barriers to menstrual equity in Canada. This initiative aims to tackle issues related to affordability and stigma surrounding menstrual products. The project, funded with \$17.9 million, will distribute free menstrual products to low-income communities and partner with grassroots organizations to promote education and awareness about period poverty. This effort is part of a broader government initiative to advance menstrual equity, including providing free products in schools and federally regulated workplaces.

The Menstrual Equity Fund (MEF) pilot project seeks to ensure equal and comprehensive access to menstrual products and sexual and reproductive health education. It is essential because many Canadians, particularly those in marginalized groups, face financial limitations and social norms that hinder their access to these essential products. A public opinion survey revealed that a significant percentage of Canadians have experienced period poverty.

The project's phases included research and engagement activities to understand the menstrual equity landscape, leading to the selection of Food Banks Canada to implement the pilot. This initiative builds upon existing efforts to address menstrual equity in First Nations schools and federal workplaces. Ultimately, the goal is to make menstrual products more accessible, reduce stigma, and promote inclusivity and understanding around menstruation in Canada.

Message from the president

Dear friends of the Canadian Hispanic Congress,

As we enter the month of October, the enthusiasm and excitement begin to build among Spanish-speaking Canadians. The month of October has been designated Latin American Heritage Month by the Canadian government. For Hispanics, Latin Americans, or simply Spanish speakers, it is a time for remembrance, reflection, and a time for celebration.

According to the Canadian government there were “fewer than 2,000 people of Latin American heritage in 1955”. Today, we know the number of people of Hispanic Latin American heritage to be well over 1,000,000 people, from 21 different countries living and working throughout Canada’s 10 provinces and 3 territories.

Canadians of Hispanic Latin American descent are strong, creative, and hard-working contributors to Canada’s present and future. Hispanic Latin American culture has become woven into the fabric of Canadian society. Our contributions are evident in Canadian politics, defense, science, academics, arts, music and in every aspect of our country’s life.

Since 2001 and for the past twenty-two years, the Canadian Hispanic Congress has remained vigilant about the importance of being accurately statistically acknowledged to the Canadian population of Hispanic Latin American descent.

The Canadian Hispanic Congress salutes all Canadians of Hispanic Latin American heritage and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that the information gathered is presented in a manner that accurately reflects the strength of the Spanish-speaking community. In the days ahead, we will share the latest and most representative information about our young and thriving community.

Send us your pictures to president@canadianhispaniccongress.com and we will proudly share them on our platforms as we celebrate Hispanic Latin American Heritage Month.

Happy Hispanic Latin American Heritage Month!

Monique Forster

President

Canadian Hispanic Congress



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