

# A Quebecer in Paris: there is no problem with English signs in French capital



**Mike Cohen**

Twenty-eight years after my previous and only visit to Paris, I recently returned from a week in the French capital and some very specific observations from the perspective of a Montrealer.

**LANGUAGE:** During his 18 months as Minister for International Affairs for the PQ, Jean-François Lisée came to Paris on a number of occasions. Lisée is a bright and impeccably bilingual individual. I wonder if he noticed the extraordinary amount of English signage on the main streets of Paris, not to mention the metro stations. Nobody here seems to be worried about a threat to the French language. This is the number one

tourism address in the world. There is no question though that people like myself from Montreal have a distinct advantage over other tourists since we can speak and understand the language.

**THE METRO:** While my recollections of the metro system from nearly three decades ago were generally good, I nonetheless felt a little concerned when I reviewed one of the city maps before I left and was reminded how huge Paris is. How would my family navigate ourselves across such a massive number of metro stations (300), crisscrossing 14 lines? Well let me tell you that if the Montreal metro system was like the one in Paris I would probably never use a car. There is a station virtually every couple of blocks. Every destination is simple to reach. The metro cars are always crowded (translated into safety) and the stations pretty clean. It took us barely a day to

be able to find our way anywhere in the city.

**MUSÉE GRÉVIN:** I have been meaning to visit the Montreal edition of The Musée Grévin ([www.grevin.com](http://www.grevin.com)) since it opened at the Eaton Centre just over a year ago. It has not happened. So in Paris I went to the original. In fact, only one other exists in the world – in Prague, Czech Republic. This is a fabulous wax museum, with a specific French feel in terms of many of the actors and historical figures featured. I nonetheless got to pose with the likes of Elton John, Angelina Jolie, Nicholas Cage, Barack Obama, Céline Dion and René Angélil and many other familiar faces. Your visit starts off with a unique sound and light show. I am now ready to visit the museum in Montreal.

**WE FOUND ANNA:** Fans of CBC Television in Montreal might have been wondering where popular entertainment reporter Anna Asimakopoulos has gone this past year. Well she and her husband Preston and kids Clara and Nicholas have been living in Paris for the past year. They return home in September. When I reached Anna, she had just finished running some errands at which time “I did what I love to do most — get lost and see where I end up. It was amazing. Paris is great to just wander through.” Anna says she came to Paris with a few goals, including improving her French. You can read a whole lot more about Anna, not to mention the start of my series of travel stories on Europe in the present and Aug. 15 editions of The Suburban Magazine.

**COHEN CHATTER:** I never got around to checking out the Paris version of Schwartz's Deli. But I can tell you that it is owned by a David Rubenstein and appears to have copied the Montreal logo...Canada's Ambassador to France is Lawrence Cannon, who as a former

foreign affairs minister in the Tory government, is eminently qualified for the post. Rumor has it he might be summoned back to run as a star candidate in a Quebec riding... Yes I did dine at the Café de Flore, the backdrop and title of Quebecer Jean-Marc Vallée's highly acclaimed motion picture. It is good for people watching and ambiance, but overpriced.

*Mike Cohen can be reached at [mcohen@thesuburban.com](mailto:mcohen@thesuburban.com). Follow him on Twitter @mikecohensl and at <http://blog.thesuburban.com>.*

## MEETINGS

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Montréal."

For an annual cost of approximately \$25,000 residents at home will simply have to click on the homepage of the city's website to have access to the session that includes the report of the Police Service, the highlights of the month's activities and the citizens' question period.

The council chamber will be outfitted with three cameras and microphones to capture the sounds and images of the meetings. The recordings will then be made available to be reviewed in the following days and weeks as they will be kept in archives.

According to Beis's Facebook page the firm that was hired by the city of Montréal already broadcasts council meetings for ten boroughs, the municipal council meetings and the weekly

meetings of the Executive Committee. All recorded sessions can be seen on the Webtv.coop Website. ■

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