

Guilty until proven innocent

Revenu Quebec Targets Nearly \$4 Billion In new "collections"

By Ari R. Kugler BA LLB

Tax assessments have exploded over the past five years as Revenu Quebec is under increasing pressure to "recover taxes" to the tune of nearly \$4 Billion dollars this year, an increase of nearly 75%! While most government agencies are either frozen or laying off employees, Revenu Quebec has created a veritable army of auditors with the addition of over 1,100 employees in the last two years. Their goal is to recover nearly ten dollars

from taxpayers for every dollar spent.

"When a Revenu Quebec auditor spends one day on your file, say at a cost of about \$1,000, we know they are looking to recover at least ten times that" says Raphael Dahan, a senior partner and well known accountant at DBG&Associates located on Decarie. Since the agencies share information, once Revenu Quebec comes out with their assessment, it won't be long until the Federal government will want their piece. "Our telephone rings almost every day with new

requests from Revenu Quebec to the point where we had to tell them to get in line, we're booked solid" he adds.

Unlike the normal rules in law, Revenu Quebec and Revenue Canada place the burden of proof on the taxpayer. This means that you are guilty until proven innocent and it's up to you to provide proof to back up expenses, claims, payments or even deposits into your account, explains Me. Vanessa Phima, an attorney with the new legal specialty firm, Taxgoalie.

The problem arises when over zealous auditors abuse the government's massive arsenal of resources and laws in their quest to collect nearly \$4 billion dollars, Me. Phima adds. In a landmark court ruling earlier this year, Revenu Quebec was subject to a very tough judgement awarding Groupe Enico

and its founder Jean-Yves Archambault \$4 million, including \$2 million in punitive damages. Justice Steve Reimnitz wrote that the agency abused its powers, acted maliciously and in bad faith, and exhibited unjustified and blameworthy administrative doggedness in the way it handled the tax file. (Groupe Enico inc. c. Agence du revenu du Québec 2013 QCCS 5189).

While this case is not the norm, there are strategies and recourses that a taxpayer can use in defending their rights. So while a call from Revenu Quebec is among the most spine chilling, having the right back up documentation and guidance will certainly level the playing field.■

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

West Islanders are just mad about Yummeez Bakery

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

During her first go around as the owner of a popular bakery on the West Island,

Lisa Finiffter gained quite a loyal following. When she sold the business and moved on to other ventures, it was difficult for her to go anywhere without people asking when she would return.

Finiffter's absence from the bakery scene amounted to eight years, but last December she and her team resurfaced at Shakespeare Plaza at 4313 Boulevard St. Jean in Dollard des Ormeaux under the catchy name "Yummeez." It quickly became the "go to" place for freshly baked goods. While items like challah, party sandwiches, chopped liver, cheese bagels, venikas and knishes and are big sellers, Finiffter has focused much of her operation on healthy choices as well.

"I am into running and healthy eating," Finiffter says. "So I have introduced items like freshly made turkey burgers, multi-grain challah and croissants, gluten free challah, eggplant and different salads like quinoa."

Yummeez has a steady Jewish clientele and on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, special meals, including their famous brisket, will be available and delivered. The cater-



Lisa Finiffter

ing division provides meals for shivas, unveilings and corporate events.

A wholesale division is also in operation, with items such as the Danish pastries in high demand by other stores. "Everything is made here on site from scratch," boasts Finiffter.

The storefront is large and spacious and while there is a steady flow of regular customers, new people are discovering the place every day. This is the kind of place where you will walk in with one or two items on your shopping list and triple the amount you actually purchase. The display cases are that tempting.

Yummeez is open daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., except for Saturday when it closes at 6 p.m. For more information call 514-696-8484 and follow them on Facebook.

ADVOCACY

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Williams-Ness lives in a strange Catch 22 because if she gets a job, her remaining government services will be cut and any job she could get due to her disability does not provide enough hours or pay to live on. She has to live alone even though she needs help for many common activities. Recently, Williams-Ness fell in her bathroom and could not right herself, remaining on the floor for hours before finally getting to a phone at 4 a.m.

"I rely on help wherever I can get it but with all of the government's cuts, I may have to go back to assisted living," said Williams-Ness who finds it ironic since assisted living costs the government a lot more than providing adequate home care.

Williams-Ness is an only child and her surviving parent, her father lives in Toronto and is not an active presence in her life. "We need the government to relax the rules on people with limited mobility," Williams-Ness said. "Allow us to live together without penalty and stop saying you cannot help as your health cuts affect the most vulnerable."

One agency where Williams-Ness has found help is through West Island Citizen Advocacy who provides volunteers with a number of handicapped and senior West Island citizens who need help with shopping, medical appointments or just to break the isola-

tion of living alone.

"Many of our clients with mobility issues need help with food preparation or cleaning," said Marla Newhook of WICA. "If someone needs to alter their bathroom so it can be modified for their wheelchair, who will install it for them let alone pay for it?"

Newhook expects WICA to have to pick up even more slack once the provincial government makes its cuts to the health sector as a way to lower Quebec's ever growing debt. "We need to be providing more resources so that people with mobility issues can be as autonomous as possible."

"There are not enough services readily available for those who need them," said Ronald Davidson of the Quebec Society for Disabled Children. "Waiting lists can be as long as 18 months for children of special needs to get services and there needs to be more resources for the public otherwise families have to resort to the private sector which can be very costly."

Despite the fact that she might not be able to stay in her own apartment, Williams-Ness is an optimist. She is a member of one of WICA's advisory boards and looks forward to the day when Quebec handicapped residents will get enough funding to allow them to live as independently as possible.

"If I can help out in anyway by raising money or awareness, I'll be out trying to do it," said Williams-Ness.■

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