



# PARTY CENTRAL

by Emily Haws

## Ninety years of Canada-France diplomatic relations celebrated with wine, oysters, and French desserts

The night also celebrated the reopening of the French embassy's Salon de Bouleaux, which had undergone renovations in September.

French food, well-dressed guests, and trivia about Canada and France? Count **Party Central** in.

French Ambassador **Kareen Rispal**, along with the rest of her staff, hosted a delightful gathering on Dec. 4 in celebration of the 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and Canada.

Given the multitude of rooms, it was difficult to determine how many people attended, but it was standing-room-only when Ms. Rispal addressed the crowd in the main room.

At the beginning of her remarks, she taught the crowd to use Poll Everywhere, a tool that allows people to vote on subjects using their phones. The multiple-choice trivia questions spread throughout her remarks included how many times France fits into Canada, how many countries are included in North America, and how much maple syrup France imported from Canada last year.

Perhaps the most divisive question in the bunch was what country was one's favourite, with the choices being "France," "Canada," "Neither," or "Both! I don't want to get into trouble!"

"Both" won out by far, with guests laughing as they saw the results.

International Development Minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau** and La Francophonie Minister **Mélanie Joly** were there representing the government, with both speaking about the importance of the relationship between the two countries. The crowd nodded along, with many sipping on red or white wine.

Along with celebrating 90 years of bilateral friendship, the night was the official re-opening of Salon des Bouleaux, the Birches Room, which underwent renovation in September.

Originally opened as a smoking room, the birch bark wallpaper was starting to look worn, said French Embassy communications officer **Eric Navel**. The embassy was given restoration money from the **George & Helen Vari Foundation**, and Ms. Vari was on hand to give remarks. **George Vari**, a real estate developer and philanthropist, is the member of both the Order of Canada and France's Legion d'Honneur. Along with its original name, it was named Salon de l'honorable George Vari in their honour.

The lineup at the oyster bar multiplied af-

ter the remarks were finished, with chefs also offering up foie gras and a charcuterie spread at multiple stations around the embassy. The dining hall held a large table of desserts, including French macaroons and eclairs.

There were many familiar faces at the party, including Quebec Conservative MP **Steven Blaney**, Liberal MP **Denis Paradis**, and former prime minister **Joe Clark**, his wife **Maureen McTeer**, and their daughter **Catherine**. National Gallery of Canada director **Marc Mayer** was also spotted.

Former deputy parliamentary budget officer **Sahir Khan**, who is now with the University of Ottawa's Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, was seen taking in the Christmas decor along with his colleague **Helaina Gaspard**.

Fashion journalist **Katrina Turnbull** had on a floor-length black chiffon skirt that flowed as she walked, which she said was purchased on a trip to Miami. Other media in attendance included *Le Devoir's* **Marie Vastel** and CBC News' **Julie Van Dusen**.

Carleton University journalism professor **Andrew Cohen** was also there, as was newly-minted Norman Paterson School of International Affairs senior fellow **Lawrence Lederman**.

### CWTA hosts holiday cocktail at Riviera on Sparks in Ottawa

Earlier on that night, the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association held its annual holiday cocktail, with the main room at the Riviera on Sparks Street so crowded it was difficult to hear the person next to you.

The cocktail list was to die for, remarked guests, and **Party Central** had to agree. The Grapefruits of Wrath—which contained Tromba Tequila Blanco, lemon, simple syrup, and hopped grapefruit bitters with lots of ice, among other ingredients—tasted like biting into a fresh grapefruit on a summer day, but with an extra kick.

Too bad the weather wasn't looking more summery, but hey, it's December. The massive charcuterie spread on the bar featured a broad range of options, and it seems most guests went back for seconds. Wait staff also milled about the room, offering sliders or other hors-d'oeuvres.

While there, I bumped into Tactix principal **Courtney Lockhart**, along with *The Wire Report's* **Kyle Duggan**, **Anja Karadeglija**, and **Ahmad Hathout**.

Also spotted were Enight Canada's **John Delacourt**, **Andrew Balfour**, and **Shane Mackenzie**, along with CTV News' **Glen McGregor**.

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## French ambassador Rispal hosts swanky party in Salon de Bouleaux

The Hill times photographs by Jean-Marc Carisse



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