

TELEVISION

Tuck in with TV

Five Canadian films and shows to binge over holiday break B8

HEALTHY KIDS

Rest easy

What’s the difference between night terrors, nightmares? B8



BUSINESS

MARKETPLACE, B5

COMPETITION ACT

Public input sought in Ottawa’s review of law

Advocates hope to see lower prices, better conditions for workers

CHRISTINE DOBBY
BUSINESS REPORTER

Lower prices, better treatment for workers and an economy not dominated by a handful of mega-corporations. That’s the dream, at least, for some competition law reform advocates. The federal government is looking for input from experts as well as the public at large on its review of the Competition Act, which is set to wrap up on Feb. 27. It’s the first major review in more

than a decade to tackle the laws that shape key elements of how businesses operate, including rules around mergers, misleading advertising and how to stop dominant companies from abusing their power. And in a consultation paper, the government has indicated it’s open to some new ideas, like considering for the first time how two companies merging might affect people’s jobs. “I think there’s an opportunity to integrate workers and worker welfare into the legislation in a way

that’s never been done before,” said Robin Shaban, who recently co-founded the Canadian Anti-Monopoly Project, a think tank dedicated in part to reforming competition laws. As it stands, the Competition Act doesn’t mention workers as a factor to consider in mergers and job losses can actually be a positive factor for companies arguing that a take-over should be approved. The “efficiencies defence,” can save an anti-competitive merger from being blocked if the merging SEE COMPETITION, B4

LABOUR

New Unifor president hoping to pave a new path

ROSA SABA

The new president of Canada’s largest private-sector union is looking to pave a new path heading into 2023 after a year filled with economic uncertainty and worker strikes, all on top of a months-long scandal that shook members’ trust. “I have a lot to offer in terms of the direction that I think the union needs to go in,” Lana Payne said at a sit-down interview in her new Toronto office, sparsely decorated as she adjusts to her new role. As Unifor — which was created in 2013 from the combination of the Canadian Auto Workers union and Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada — approaches its 10-year anniversary, Payne believes it is entering a new era. “I want it to be the strongest and most progressive union in the country,” she said. “That’s what I want people to think about when they think of Unifor. I don’t want them to think of one person.” Unifor made headlines earlier this year when high-profile then-president Jerry Dias was accused of accepting a bribe. He stepped down from his post ahead of his planned retirement and a contentious election ensued, with his former assistant competing against Payne and another contender — the first contested election since Dias was elected at Unifor’s founding. Payne, who took the helm in August, has her work cut out for her. SEE UNIFOR, B4

RESTAURANTS

Planning to dine out? Be ready to prepay

Changing industry sees eateries adding cancellation fee to reservations

CASSANDRA SZKLARSKI

Since netting a Michelin star earlier this year, Vancouver’s Québécois-themed bistro St. Lawrence has been especially busy, with its chef crediting robust bookings to the confluence of extra buzz and the annual crush of holiday revellers. In order to manage the flood of reservations, restaurateur J-C Poirier says bookings are capped at one month in advance and diners are asked to prepay for their meals. “That was an idea that came with the pandemic but it turns out that it is such a good model, and it works for our restaurant,” says Poirier. “We know what you order, we know how many staff we need. We also eliminated completely the problem of people not showing for the reservation or cancelling at the last minute for whatever reason.” Pent-up demand appears to be fuelling a hearty appetite for restaurant dining this holiday season, as pandemic-weary Canadians seek festive gatherings for the first time in three years. Industry analyst Vince Sgabellone of the analytics firm NPD Group says that’s especially thanks to families keen to venture out again, as well as sustained interest among the broader population that rebounded in the spring when public spaces reopened. “They miss the socializing, they miss the experience, they miss the food,” says Sgabellone. “They miss everything and they just want to get out of the house, especially with so many people still



CARLO RICCI THE CANADIAN PRESS

J-C Poirier says bookings at his Vancouver bistro are capped at one month in advance and diners are asked to prepay for their meals.

working from home.” With increased demand comes a flood of reservations, but that welcome scheduling challenge is vulnerable to cancellations and last-minute change-ups, says Poirier. His restaurant imposed a \$20 cancellation fee in 2019 but entire tables would still not show up. “If you get an appointment at the dentist or even like yoga, if you don’t show up you’re going to be charged a certain amount of money,” says Poirier. “I don’t know why it became a standard for the restaurant industry that it’s OK, we can just not show up for our appointment. For me, it had no logic in that so I wanted to do something in the hope that

other restaurants will follow. “And I think most people now are taking at least a small amount of money on reservations.” Poirier says they are “civilized and fair” in cases where a guest calls to say they can’t make it. Most often he says that results in rescheduling to another date. The St. Lawrence website says credits are issued for cancellations with at least 48 hours’ notice, but are not guaranteed otherwise. Refunds are only for “few exceptions.” The Toronto eatery 20 Victoria has a prepay reservation system for its \$175 set menu, which includes gratuity, says host and owner Chris White. SEE RESTAURANT, B4

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J-C POIRIER
RESTAURATEUR

TODAY’S NEWS

- Beyond inflation and rising interest rates, companies in Quebec also are concerned about how hard French-first laws will be enforced. B2
- Canadians left scrambling for flights home from Mexico are being urged to sue by passenger advocate unless Sunwing steps up. B3
- Analysts expect growth in spending at Canadian oil and gas companies for 2023, but not a return to boom times. B3

MARKETS

▲ S&P/500	3,829.25 -15.57
▼ DJIA	33,241.56 +37.63
▲ NASDAQ	10,353.23 -144.64
▼ GOLD	US \$1,821.80 +US \$17.60
▼ OIL	US \$79.69 +US \$0.16
▼ NATURAL GAS	US \$5.282 +US \$0.203

Canadian markets are closed