

Cllr. D'Amico 'upset' with new approach

Garbage-collection changes needed public consultation: Cllr. Roux

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

When a new garbage contract was awarded by city council December 18, it generated strong opposition from District 2 councillor Elisabeth Roux based on significant changes in the ways and frequency of collection without public consultation.

"I share her opinions and am very upset," District 1 councillor and finance commissioner Antonio D'Amico, told the *Independent*.

He had been out of the country for the vote. He said he did not know whether there were significant cost savings from changing approaches and, if so, how much.

The new measures include picking up all garbage from the front of homes rather than backs, sides or lanes – and reducing collections to once every two weeks in cooler months between October and April (see story November 14, p. 1 and mayor's column, December 12, p. 9).

These are aimed at encouraging people to compost, though no limits are being imposed on amounts of landfill-designated waste material as in some municipalities.

The new contract, starting May 1, was awarded to the the city's current subcontractor, Derichebourg Canada Environment at its bid price of \$1,064,946, including *continued on p. 20*



Skating towards 2024

On December 27 in Westmount Park, it was quiet and very few people were around, but there was a swish of skates coming from the city's outdoor refrigerated skating rink. Roslyn student Alisa was finding her feet with the whole rink to herself, perhaps due to the warm weather and lack of snow.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

Remembering former city councillors

Barbara Moore, p. 17
Tim Price, p. 18-19

Levitin appointed new city clerk

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council December 18 appointed Julia Levitin to the position of director of Legal Services and City Clerk's Office effective January 22. This position has been vacant since the departure of Denis Ferland in October.

Commenting on the appointment and welcoming Levitin to Westmount, Mayor Christina Smith said she and Councillor Jeff Shamie, who moved the resolution, had met and spoken with her. No stranger to the demerged cities, Levitin has worked

in legal positions in Dorval and Beaconsfield.

During the vacancy in Westmount, director general Julie Mandeville worked as substitute city clerk with assistance from the outside legal firms of Bélanger Sauvé and IMK (see story November 7, p. 1).

A vital component of the city's operation, numerous responsibilities of the city clerk's office include the preparation of council meetings, legal opinions, protection of city archives and documents, and work as secretary of the corporation as well as that of a returning officer during an election.

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125 years – 125 roses at the library

BY RALPH THOMPSON

The Westmount Public Library celebrated the start of its 125th anniversary year by presenting white roses to the first 125 arrivals as the doors opened at 10 am January 3 for the new year. If anyone thinks libraries are a quaint antiquity from a by-gone era, the long line-up to get in at 9:50 am, January 3 would be a sober reminder that citizens love their Public Library.



Children's librarian Wendy Wayling (left), Councillor Elisabeth Roux and Daniel Míguez de Luca welcome the long line of library aficionados with a beautiful white rose.

In 1890, the Côte St. Antoine Improvement Committee, which included William Murray, purchased 16 acres of land crisscrossed by the Glen Stream to develop an English-style park. It became Westmount Park.

In 1897, Councillor William Douw Lighthall steered a motion through council to build and stock "a free public library" in the northwest corner of the park. Architect John Findlay was tasked with designing the library by a committee under then mayor James R. Walker and in 1899 the doors were opened with much fanfare.

125 years later, the library will host a number of events throughout 2024, coordinated by the 125th Anniversary committee comprising Councillor Elisabeth Roux, three citizens (Marie-Christine Dufour, Helaine Kliger and Kathleen Rogers) and library staff members Daniel Míguez de Luca, Wendy Wayling and Lora Baiocco.

The early arriving library aficionados were also treated to coffee and pastries in the Westmount Room and the children were invited to make celebratory 125th



125th Anniversary committee comprising Lora Baiocco, Councillor Elisabeth Roux, Wendy Wayling and Daniel Míguez de Luca. The committee also includes three citizens: Marie-Christine Dufour, Helaine Kliger and Kathleen Rogers.

book markers in the basement children's library.

Several people expressed surprise at the enthusiasm so early on a bleak January morning, but most of the white roses had been claimed within 15 minutes, "its wonderful. We advertised on social media, on our website, in eWestmount and at the last council meeting" said library director Anne-Marie Lacombe. Look out for more events as the year progresses.

Thanks to the Westmount Historical Association website for the source of historical data.



Lily Rose Guaiani was the first bright-faced young lady to take her mum Flora Golyaedi down to the children's library to add a few creative colourful touches to the 125th book markers.



Councillor Elisabeth Roux hands out roses.



Daniel Míguez de Luca, programming and outreach librarian, welcomes the early arrivals in the Westmount Room, where coffee and pastries were available.

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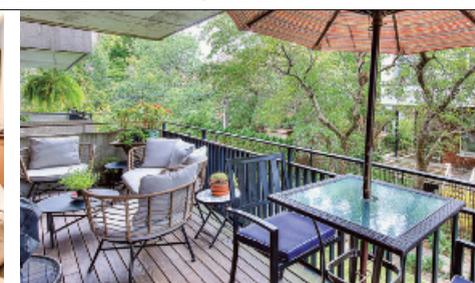
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Happy New Year to All - Bonne Année à Tous

A retrospective look at Westmount's past celebrations

Milestone year kicks off: City turns 150, library marks 125

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

While residents brought in 2024 in various ways, this year will be characterized by the city with double celebrations.

These are the 125th anniversaries of the municipal library, the first publicly funded one in Quebec, and the 150th anniversary of the area's incorporation as the village of Notre Dame de Grâce, which included current-day NDG before what is now Westmount split off in 1876 as the village of Cote St. Antoine and, in 1895, took the name of Westmount.

To kick off this year's library activities, coffee and pastries were served in the Westmount Room of the library on January 3 while the children's department made 125th bookmarks (see p. 3).

Most of the anniversary events have yet to be announced by the two citizen committees appointed by the council, except for a large celebration on the library's actual birthday, June 24, according to library director Anne-Marie Lacombe (see story May 23, p. 4).



In 1999, from left, then mayor Peter Trent, and then councillor Karin Marks at the flag raising for the 100th and 125th anniversaries of the library and city. Marks went on to be Westmount's borough president/mayor during the merger years and the first mayor of the re-constituted, demerged city.

Looking back to the library's centennial year, this was when the Friends of the Library citizen group was founded and now holds two quality book sales a year.

As part of the city's 125th municipal anniversary, a so-called re-enactment of the first council meeting took place called *There'll Be No Tavern in this Town* and, for the first time, the city celebrated St. Jean Baptiste Day with a large bonfire and entertainment in Westmount Park. Among

many highlights recorded in the year was the installation of a fibre optic cable to connect all city buildings and adoption of \$125,000 to restore the shuttered Victoria Ave. train station, which is still shuttered. The city also carried out a \$4.4-million upgrade of Victoria Hall and opened the adjacent newly-built Gallery, which now holds many exhibits and events.

While some of the annual community activities in 1999 included the ongoing Family Day, then billed as the 25th annual event, others that no longer take place include the "Dog Day Afternoon," held for 10 years at Victoria Hall, the 33rd graduation of the Junior Firefighters program and a Santa Claus parade.

An advisory committee for composting was formed – and implemented for households nine years later (see May 20-21, 2008, p. 3). The use of recycled paper was reported to have increased.

Also in 1999, civic honours were bestowed on four distinguished citizens of the past in the seventh biennial *Vin d'honneur* at Victoria Hall, which the city has not held recently.

In a harbinger of what was to come, the city undertook a feasibility study for a new recreation complex that eventually opened in 2013, as well as what was called a "final" report for the need of a sound barrier along



Riyansi Borah, 5, produces a 125th anniversary bookmarks January 3 during the library's celebration of its anniversary.

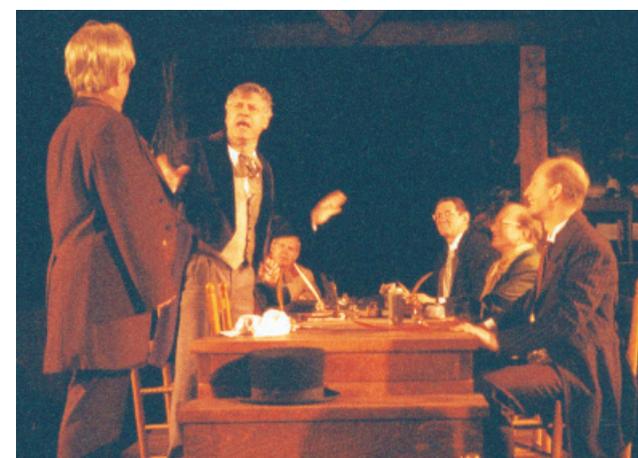
PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY.

the railway, which is now before the courts.

The city was also involved in studies regarding an amalgamation of MUHC hospitals proposed for the current Glen site, which opened 16 years later (see April 28, 2015, p. 1).

There were many differences in the city at that time. It operated its own municipal court and fire department. In that regard, the council adopted a mission statement to retain its independence as "the real threat" of forced municipal mergers into Montreal overshadowed many activities. While the mergers took place in 2002, they were largely undone in 2006.

The city faced another threat at the administrative level. This was Y2K (Year 2000) and the world-wide concern that that at mid-night an alleged "millennium bug" would shut down communication and other computer systems. All holidays were can- continued on p. 5



In a Victoria Hall re-enactment 25 years ago, left, of the municipality's first council meeting in 1874, then-mayor Peter Trent played the part of the first mayor Gustave Prud'homme. The short play, which Trent wrote, was called *There'll Be No Tavern in this Town* – in reference to the city's early teetotaling ways. Right, in 1999, then-future and now-past city councillor Victor Drury in 19th century costume.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A THANK-YOU TO THE BUS DRIVERS

When I moved from a small city in Ontario to Westmount, I got rid of my car and became a bus rider. Since then, I have witnessed two less-than-polite exchanges [with drivers blocking buses' access to stop areas].

So, I want to apologize to the bus drivers for having to experience this kind of rudeness from fellow road users.

I also want to thank the bus drivers for when I have (yet again!) miscalculated the time to get from my apartment to the bus stop, and come huffing and puffing around the corner as I try to run (something I cannot do anymore.) They gracefully open the door and wait for me, although the light has already changed to green.

I want to thank the bus drivers for informing passengers who are clearly from out of town where to get off, and which next bus to take to get to their destination.

I want to thank the bus drivers for patiently waiting for this white-haired-but-not-so-little old lady with her shopping cart and bags to get herself out of the door.

Maneuvering these large vehicles through the narrow passages created by numerous road constructions, through snow, ice and rain, is not an easy task. It is a job where not a single mistake can be tolerated; a job where even the slightest miscalculation can have the most devastating result.

You see, for the period of time that I am a passenger on the bus, mine and my fellow passenger's well-being and our lives are in the hands of the bus driver.

And, also thanks to all the parents who teach their children to be mindful and to cede their seats to the folks who are not so steady on their feet on a bus that is moving, lurching, and sometimes coming to an abrupt stop!

Please continue to get us to the places we need to go; and keep us safe while doing so. And please keep on rolling.

HEIDY VERMEULEN, METCALFE AVE.

Milestone year, cont'd from p. 4

celled for emergency personnel, including the military, and the city council chamber was turned into a coordination centre. Despite all the emergency planning and concerns, the bug never materialized. Whether worldwide preparation or the problem's non-existence saved the day is not entirely known.

As former mayor Peter Trent suggested last week to the *Independent* "(Many) of today's readers have no idea what happened in a city that they have only recently adopted, including its traditions."

THANK YOU FOR FINDING MY RAIN PANTS

Thank you to the guardian angel who found my rain pants on the ground by my car in the library parking lot and picked them up so I would see them. They would have been missed as they are an essential part of my winter cycling transportation outfit.

VIRGINIA ELLIOTT, HILLSIDE AVE.

WESTMOUNT PARK LADIES' ROOM NEEDS ATTENTION – THANKS FOR EXTRA TIME AT DE MAIS/CLARKE

I wonder whether the mayor and lady councillors have visited the ladies' restrooms in the park over the last three years.

If so, they must be appalled at the worsening condition of these restrooms.

The paint has partially peeled off from the doors and walls of both cubicles and the doors are off their hinges – it is impossible to close the door of the smaller one.

In addition, two years ago, some vandal scratched the mirror over the right-hand basin with a very sharp object.

The cleaner keeps the floors, toilets, tiles and handbasins clean, but everything else is a shambles.

I hope it will be possible in this new year to clean up and repair the damage that is unacceptable in our beautiful park.

*

On a positive note, I would like to thank the mayor and the council, although belatedly, for extending the crossing time at the traffic light at de Maisonneuve and Clarke. The extra five seconds, from 17 to 22, makes all the difference and prevents rushing across the fairly busy intersection.

MELANIE BAILEY,

DE MAISONNEUVE BLVD.

WHO IS THE BUREAUCRACY FOR?

On December 28, I went with my son and grandchildren, visiting from the UK, for general skating at the arena. My son had played hockey and refereed at the old arena 25 or 30 years ago. He was excited to show his British-born children how he had spent his youth. However, unlike the years of his youth when the highlight of post-Christmas was the pick-up hockey game at the old arena, this was now thwarted by bureaucracy.

The young employee at the downstairs desk, who was "only doing his job," prevented us from entering because I had failed to buy guest passes before December 20. No sullen kids' faces or entreaties from long-time Westmount taxpayers would warm the heart of this young employee, who assured us that we weren't the only

ones, as if this were a consolation!

We asked to speak to his boss, only to be told that his boss and the boss of his boss were both on vacation and out of town until January 2. It appeared that there was no one in charge, which even seemed strange to my 10-year-old granddaughter. Guest passes were only available from January 2, when everyone had gone home.

As my son pointed out, it would not take a computer whiz to program the system so that everyone could buy tickets on the day they wanted to skate, and the boss could happily go on vacation.

Luckily, a more enlightened young employee on the upstairs desk saved the day and overruled the downstairs desk employee and allowed them to skate for the remaining 40 minutes of general skating.

It is unfortunate that the bureaucracy seems to be organized for the benefit of the employees rather than the taxpaying public.

SUSAN BELL, VICTORIA AVE.

WHERE DO WE REALLY STAND ON REQUIRED CAPITAL WORK?

If one was on alert for any evidence of continued drift in the city, it was provided at the recent presentation of the three-year capital budget.

The budget for 2024 was promoted as a big, bold increase from the past year. One likely basis for this is the pushing into 2024 of capital projects that were planned for 2023 but not completed. Our mayor claimed that while the completion rate last year was under 100 percent, the city did achieve 100 percent in previous years apart from the COVID period. The city's own numbers tell a totally different story.

Pay-as-you-go (PAYG) is the main funding source for capital works and a key indicator of completion rates in infrastructure projects. Westmount's PAYG spending, in fact, has fallen way short of its target in every one of the last six years, clearly demonstrating the city's failure to deliver on its plan. Consequently, our infrastructure deficit continues to pile up.

Already, Councillor Peart acknowledged that by 2027, our municipal buildings will require \$100 million to be restored. What other bombshells await us – in roads, water and sewers, parks and Hydro? Tell us.

Our council finds it inconvenient to talk about this. I had submitted a question asking which projects had not been completed in 2023 but pushed out to other years. Not only was it unanswered but not even read out, breaking the established rules of a council meeting.

The city clearly has a systemic performance problem in executing its infrastructure plans. This is not sustainable. If ques-

tioned, our mayor glides over the generic constraints any city incurs in completing its capital projects. Let's face it. We no longer live in a stable, predictable world. These challenges are staying with us. Our city must build resilience and adapt. We have to get the job done, otherwise we will face an enormous bill.

Something is not working. The teams directing our infrastructure work need help. The task for our council is to ensure that they have the required skills, tools, processes and capacity. Provide it.

DENIS BIRO, BURTON AVE.

PROHIBITING FOOD WASTE IN GARBAGE WOULD ACTUALLY HELP

The year-end mayor's column (December 12, p. 9) in the *Independent* is a one-way "communication" effort that simply lectures us about her unilateral decision to cut back on trash collection during the winter months. She also admonishes those who live in connected buildings about the unfair burden their current trash collection puts on the Westmount budget and CO₂ emissions.

The mayor's arguments don't hold water. Her cut-back on winter trash collection is a formula for maximum inconvenience for minimal environmental benefits. What we get is virtue signalling via widespread inconvenience for minimal results.

In fact, the best change the mayor desires is a big reduction of food waste mixed with trash. This is a laudable and achievable goal, and doesn't require the end of weekly pick-ups. We could simply prohibit food waste mixed with trash year round ... and set up some sort of enforcement system. Doing this would bring great benefits via the increase in composting. But even this action should require meaningful discussion and transparent voting, something the mayor's far more drastic plan does not.

Regarding those with alleyway pick-up, who unilaterally decided that they are not worthy of a pick-up system that has worked for all for years? The CO₂ argument is laughable, and the argument that Westmount has better things to spend money on rings hollow and arrogant. In a city with multiple conveniences, the mayor suddenly decides to throw a significant minority under the bus – with no prior discussion or town-wide consensus.

When government acts in an autocratic fashion the rights of the people get trampled and poor decisions are the result. If the mayor and all involved do not change direction, then we must wait for the next election to see if common sense, and a democratic system, can be reestablished.

BRIAN COPP, SHORNCIFFE AVE.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**CURRENT WAY COULD WORK
JUST FINE FOR GARBAGE
COLLECTION**

Ahhh, yes, garbage collection at the curb *only* is so simple (the future way), one does not even have to think to do it.

I mean, think of the difficulties of the current way. As the mayor states, there are “challenges, particularly around 25 percent of houses in Westmount that have different locations for their bins.”

That is truly difficult for a person to remember and then when the crews change, yes, it can create some utter chaos. After all, that is a lot for a person to remember and if new to the job, how will they know where to go?? Yes, that must be terribly difficult for a person.

But wait a minute, we are the year 2024. We have cell phones and we have map apps – we have and we have and we have!! I mean, people can usually read these days, including writing and maps, and showing bin locations on maps is easy.

So what is the problem?

ALFRED EDEL, VICTORIA AVE.

**GARBAGE COLLECTION CHANGE
NEEDS A REFERENDUM**

I have resided in Westmount since 1989 and this is the first time that I am writing to the *Westmount Independent* or feeling strongly enough about an issue to voice an opinion on a political decision that I feel is undemocratic and this pertains to the

recently approved changes to the Westmount garbage-collection cycle.

The mayor and council did not run on this platform.

I find the new garbage collection of every two weeks instead of weekly to be impractical and extremely difficult to accommodate. I accept the fact that peak winter garbage is over the Christmas and New Year period, but will use this period to illustrate how impractical the proposed schedule is.

Over and above the inherent problems with rats, mice and squirrels that arrive with less frequent garbage collection, I question whether a serious survey has been made of individual households to determine their ability to accommodate the volume of garbage in each week of this new two-week schedule.

During the Christmas-New Year period, in each week we have had 1.5 green recycling bins and two full garbage cans of recycling and general garbage. There is insufficient room in my garage to accommodate the city’s proposed pick-up of every two weeks.

Other than Public Security, this is the most important service (from my perspective) that the city provides and I would ask the city to reconsider its decision.

I am willing to pay the cost of maintaining the current pick-up schedule.

As it is highly unlikely that council reverses itself, I would be curious how many people would support having a ref-

erendum to allow the citizens of Westmount to arrive at a democratic outcome.

I believe that in the 2017 municipal election 3,619 residents voted for the mayor and in the most recent election where she was acclaimed, the number of voters in contested districts was even lower.

If we use the 2017 high-water mark, five percent would be 180 people, which should be enough to demonstrate an interest in a referendum. I ran a quick straw poll of friends and have a minimum of 30 people willing to support a move in this direction. I would be interested to see if this letter generates additional support for the referendum idea from my fellow citizens.

TONY AKSICH, HOLTON AVE.

**CAQ INTERESTED IN POWER,
NOT FACTS**

With respect to David Tait’s letter to the editor (December 12, p. 7), it seems obvious that facts don’t appear to matter concerning language issues in Quebec. For some strange reason, the CAQ government seems to be more interested in using scare tactics and manipulating the numbers to stay in power.

It is instructive to look at the preliminary report for the next Quebec election map (cloud.cartovista.com/elections_quebec/maps/4c0813/Proposition-du-rapport-preliminaire-Commentaires) to see where the votes are to be distributed and where the government needs support to get elected. Interestingly, one electoral division is being withdrawn from the eastern part of Île de Montréal, giving Montreal even less of a voice.

PETER NAYLOR, NDG

**CAQ ATTACKS FREEDOM
OF EVERYONE**

Congratulations, Jonathan Sommer (letter: “Legault, CAQ at heart of discrimination problem,” December 5, p. 8), you have hit the nail on the head, as the saying goes.

Yes, François Legault and his henchman Simon Jolin-Barrette, our minister of Justice, are discriminating against over a million anglophone Quebecers who take pride in belonging to this unique and lovable conglomeration of citizens called the province of Quebec, still a part of Canada.

You are right, Jonathan:

“Mr. Legault and his party, the CAQ, have built their power on a foundation of identity politics, bigotry, division and discrimination. With Bills 21, 40 and 96, he has done what he can to attack those who are not like him ...

“He takes away the opportunities and choices of francophones to live, learn, communicate and function in the wider world.

“[H]e attacks the freedom of everyone

in the province by suspending core human rights, including freedom of religion, freedom of expression, the right not to be subjected to unreasonable search and seizure, the right to an interpreter in court, the right to equal protection under the law, the right not to be discriminated against based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, etc. Yes, that’s correct – Legault’s new laws suspend all of those rights.”

This is happening in our country, Canada.

SHIRLEY SKEANS NEWELL, SHERBROOKE ST.

FRANÇAIS EN DÉCLIN?

A couple of things have happened since the *Westmount Independent* published my letter on December 12, 2023 (p. 7): (1) I received lots of feedback and most asked, “What can we do?”; and (2) a book (*Le français en déclin? Repenser la francophonie québécoise*) of 22 essays was published in mid-November. (It is available through Renaud-Bray, Archambault, Chapters, Amazon.)

I will make a few comments on the second item first. I do not think that it is controversial to state that many people have made decisions based on the premise that the French language in Quebec is in decline:

1. in December 2020, six former Quebec premiers wrote a joint letter to *La Presse* and used the premise of the decline of French usage to support the strengthening of Bill 101 and ask that it be applied to federal institutions in Quebec (i.e. Air Canada, CN, Business Development Bank, etc.) As a pertinent aside, Serge Joyal in December 2020 wrote in *The Montreal Gazette* that if that went forward, “...at stake is the very concept of Canada.”
2. The CAQ passed Bill 96 on the basis that French was in decline.
3. The federal government passed Bill C-13 (an act to amend the Official Languages Act) *continued on p. 7*

**Correction: Cutlers
received Sinclair trophy**

The second-to-last paragraph of our story “Old Timers/SWAT charity tournament finishes 32nd tourney” (December 12, p. 24) was wrong.

It should have read: The Ken Sinclair Trophy for Sportsmanship was awarded to Adam and Marina Cutler, and François Proulx (a volunteer Hydro Westmount employee) received the Howard Hoppenheim Trophy for Perseverance.

The Sinclair trophy is named for the late Ken Sinclair, who was one of the tournament’s original co-founders.

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To develop, expand community partnerships: Mayor Smith Sports & Rec's Lapointe to head new division that includes library

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

As the city looks to “expand community partnerships and changing needs,” city council December 18 appointed longtime Sports and Recreation department director Dave Lapointe to director of culture, sports, recreation and social development.

This applies to a new “division” being created in the city structure to include the longstanding department of Library and Community Events and the department of Sports and Recreation. “Social Development is the new addition,” city director general Julie Maindeville told the *Independent*.

Involving outreach

This aspect was addressed by Mayor Christina Smith at the meeting, saying that Lapointe's role will involve outreach and development of new programs with organizations and partners that work with the city such as Marianopolis, Dawson and the YMCA.

“We would be hard pressed to find someone who knows the community like Dave Lapointe” because of his leadership

of the Westmount recreation centre, she said. It would not be adding headcount but “switching positions,” to which questioner John Fretz of Lansdowne Ave. replied: “Makes sense.”

Mandeville later clarified the changes saying that “Day-to-day (operations) will not change. The eventual objective of this new division will be to provide our residents and organizations with services to improve the quality of life and the sense of belonging through the combined expertise, leadership and actions of all these departments.”

Within the Library and Community Events department, “the reporting line will not change,” she added. The Community Events office will continue to report to Anne-Marie Lacombe, the library director. Lacombe will now, however, report to Lapointe rather than directly to the director general.

Lapointe also retains his regular day-to-day responsibilities directly connected with the Sports and Recreation department.

Lapointe has also been acting as substitute director general.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

relying on that same argument.

If anyone has read my letter, you will remember that, on an historic basis, this premise is misinformed.

Who has promoted this misinformation? Well, let us delve into the book, *Le français en déclin*. On p. 37, Steven Therrien and Richard Marcoux point out that, since 2019, the number of media articles and references to *le déclin du français* has skyrocketed (gone up 100-fold)! The election of the Legault government took pace in 2018. Does anyone see a connection here? Legault and his cabinet members' mentioning of *le déclin du français* worked its way into the media and consciousness of its recipients.

Stepping out of my role as a pure-facts disseminator, I must say that I feel that (ultra-nationalist) Legault has stoked this misinformation to promote his agenda. Is this propaganda? Even so, the Leger poll that I previously mentioned indicated that the threat to the French language was ninth on Quebecers' minds...

Now back to item 1. What can we do? Well, buy the book and become better informed (Julius Gray has an excellent essay therein). Secondly, you could financially contribute to those who are challenging

these new laws. Even small contributions by a lot of people can result in large sums. The *Independent* has named the various challengers from time to time and you can contact these people. I, personally, have no connection to any of these groups.

Thirdly, you can challenge those who say that the use of French is in decline. I have asked *The Montreal Gazette* the basis for its using that term and I have not heard back. Such “challenges” could also apply to Anna Gainey and Jennifer Maccarone by asking them to express their views and why we do not hear from them on these issues.

Eminent Quebecer André Pratte tried to stand up to the distorted reasoning of the Trudeau government (“Justin Trudeau, Constitutional Capitulation,” *The Montreal Gazette*, May 20, 2021). We need more of that, and now.

So please get informed, contribute financially and let our politicians know your views and concerns. You can see from my mentioning Serge Joyal and André Pratte that while at times we feel that we are alone, we are not.

Together we can make a difference for our community and Quebec.

DAVID TAIT, ST. MARGUERITE



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APPEL AUX CANDIDATURES POUR LE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT ET LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE

La mission du Comité consultatif sur l'environnement et le développement durable (« CED ») est de proposer des orientations et d'émettre des recommandations au Conseil municipal sur les questions relatives à la gestion par la Ville de l'environnement et du développement durable à Westmount.

Le comité, composé de sept (7) membres au maximum, comprendra jusqu'à trois (3) membres du public, deux (2) membres de l'administration municipale et trois (3) membres du conseil municipal.

La Ville recherche des personnes ayant de l'expérience et de l'intérêt pour les questions environnementales et durables. Nous invitons les résidents et les défenseurs de la communauté à poser leur candidature :

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- Les experts et les professionnels engagés dans des pratiques respectueuses de l'environnement.
- Les personnes impliquées dans des organisations communautaires qui encouragent la sensibilisation à l'environnement et les pratiques durables.

La durée du mandat est de mars 2024 à février 2026.

Si vous avez à cœur de créer une communauté plus durable et plus respectueuse de l'environnement, nous vous encourageons à poser votre candidature et à mettre votre expertise au service de nos initiatives. Visitez westmount.org/ced

CALL FOR APPLICANTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

The mission of the Environment and Sustainability Committee (“ESC”) is to propose orientations and issue recommendations to the City Council on matters pertaining to the City's management of the environment and sustainable development in Westmount.

The committee, consisting of up to seven (7) members, will include up to three (3) members of the public, two (2) from the City administration, and three (3) from City Council.

The City is seeking individuals with experience and an interest in environmental and sustainable issues. We invite residents and community advocates to apply, including:

- Persons knowledgeable in environmental and sustainable issues.
- Experts and professionals committed to eco-friendly practices.
- Individuals involved in community organizations that foster environmental awareness and sustainability practices.

The term of the mandate is from March 2024 to February 2026.

If you are dedicated to creating a more sustainable and environmentally conscious community, we encourage you to apply and contribute your expertise to our initiatives. Go to westmount.org/esc

westmount.org

Borrowing to get things done**City adopts \$35.5M capital budget, ponders costs ahead**

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A capital works budget of \$35.5 million for 2024 was presented and adopted by city council December 18 that introduces a major change in financing. This is to be through a loan by-law of \$7.66 million to help fund the taxation (pay-as-you-go) portion that comes from the operating budget.

Borrowing for the capital works budget is something the city has resisted over previous years. But times have changed, it was explained.

"We are now faced with the challenge of needing to take on more urgent projects than we have in the past," announced Mayor Christina Smith before Councillor Conrad Peart outlined some of these specific projects.

Among those listed for this year are the reconstruction of Upper Lansdowne (Lansdowne Ridge to Edgheill) as well as Dorchester between St. Catherine and Greene and work on side streets that adjoin The Boulevard such as Braeside Place. This is to prepare for future work on that main artery.

In presenting the capital budget, Councillor Peart, whose commissionership

includes infrastructure and urban planning, said that given the city's aging infrastructure, Public Works "estimates that \$100 million may be needed to maintain, renovate and upgrade our buildings between now and 2027."

The city's aging roads and sewers also need to withstand "the increased recurrence of and intensity of storms."

100 projects for 2024

In terms of capital works, "a lot has been done in 2023, and we want to keep up the momentum," Peart explained. "Approximately 100 small, medium and large-scale projects are part of the work in 2024." Along with the major road reconstruction projects, these are to include about 10 water works projects and some 20 related to the maintenance or repair of public buildings.

While the city shies away from a breakdown of its estimates for specific projects in order to prevent tipping its hand to bidders, it instead provides total amounts by category of work.

For this year, these are listed as:

- \$9.7 million for roads and street lights;
- \$9 million for buildings;
- \$6.5 million for water and sewer work;
- \$4.9 million for parks;
- \$2.4 million for electrical distribution by Hydro Westmount;
- \$2.2 million for vehicles, and
- \$0.9 million for IT.

Park work includes pathways in Westmount and King George (Murray) parks as well as Summit Woods and creating the Douglas Ellis Memorial Garden in Westmount Park.

In financing the total \$35.5 million, \$13.8 million is to come from the pay-as-you-go allocation from the operating budget's taxation component, along with \$12.7 million from accumulated surplus along with a loan by-law of \$7.7 million and \$175,000 from various grants and donations. A budget note states that the financing may differ from the budget "depending on the availability."

Presented as usual as part of an annual three-year capital works program (2024-2025-2026), the later years have historically been referred to as a "wish list" depending on the means of financing and other uncertainties. The years 2025 and 2026, for example, call for totals of \$42.7 million each.

The budget is outlined on the city website's under "Finances and Budgets." An interactive map intended to detail dates and projects in various areas is subject to change as the year progresses.



Claremont Ave. on January 12. It was re-done last year.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Taxes on average dwelling rise 4.55%**City's overall 2024 budget of \$135M adopted by council**

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The city's operating budget for 2024 of \$134.89 million, adopted December 18, calls for an average tax increase for single-family dwellings of 4.55 percent, "slightly under inflation," Mayor Christina Smith stated in its presentation.

While this is a barometer traditionally used by the city for the largest category of taxpayers, this will be the first time the same tax rate, of 0.6347 per \$100 of evaluation, is to apply to all residential buildings. This includes those of more than six units in the hopes that it will translate into "a limitation of rent increases for renters especially in this time of inflation," she said.

As a result, the impact of the new tax rate on the average single-family dwelling valued at \$2,568,715 will be a property tax bill of \$16,303, according to Councillor Antonio D'Amico.

The tax rate on non-residential (commercial) buildings will be \$2.7925 on \$100 of evaluation.

Revenues up 4.1%

The \$134.89 million operating budget is to be funded mainly through \$110 million of taxation and "in lieu" taxes for federal and provincial government properties as well as another estimated \$12 million in transfer ("welcome-tax") duties. Other revenues come from sources such as parking meters, tickets and fines, permits and

licences as well as recreation activities.

These total \$136.25 million but are offset by a net loss from Hydro Westmount of \$1.36 million.

Expenditures up 3.1%

The single highest budget expenditure is \$71 million for the city's payment to the Montreal agglomeration for island-wide services such as fire, police and transit (an increase of 5.4 percent). This, along with another \$1.1 million to the regional Montreal Metropolitan Community, accounts for a total of just under \$72 million.

The city's costs of its own operation will increase 8.3 percent to \$64 million. The highest of these is employee remuneration of \$31.5 million (up 8.1 percent). This is followed by departmental costs of \$19.8 million, of which Public Works at \$12.1 million is the highest, up two percent.

Library and Community Events is to receive an increase of 31.3 percent for celebration of the city's 150th anniversary and the library's 125th, both taking place this year (see separate story, p. 4).

The pay-as-you-go portion from taxation used to help finance the capital works budget is budgeted at some \$24 million. This is up 10 percent over 2023. However, the total of local expenditures (including items such as pension costs and debt service) of \$79.5 million is being offset from a surplus appropriation of \$15.4 million to \$64.1 million.

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Some uncompleted projects held over from 2023 budget

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

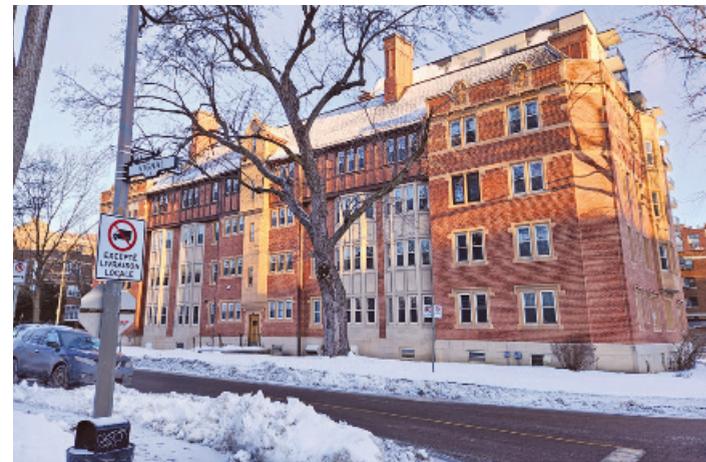
One of the uncompleted 2023 capital works projects held over for 2024 is the “Espace Culturel” at the Westmount Public Library. This is a project to mark the library’s 125th anniversary and one of a few listed last week by Councillor Antonio D’Amico, finance commissioner.

This space is to be created in the loca-

tion of the library’s former audio-vision collection inside a new park entrance and described as a “makerspace,” whose focus is to be on audio-visual development and production (see story October 10, p. 1).

While some other projects could not be carried out, he said, others were added during the year. These new ones included the addition and completion of four road resurfacing projects: Barat Rd. and Vignal Ave., Summit Rd., Upper Bellevue Ave., and Claremont between de Maisonneuve and Sherbrooke.

“The capital works program is an evolving process that adapts to different constraints throughout the year,” D’Amico explained. Reasons that some projects could not be completed included “availability” of resources, revision of plans and redefinition of projects. A final assessment is under way.



Vignal Ave. on January 12. To the *Independent’s* knowledge, it is the only street in Westmount that has no building with an address on it. It runs from Sherbrooke to Barat between Wood and Atwater. PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.



MONIQUE LAFONTAINE VÉZINA

1934 - 2023

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Westmounter Monique Lafontaine Vézina in Montreal on December 11, 2023, surrounded by her loved ones.

She was predeceased by her husband Maurice G. Vézina, her brother Hébert Lafontaine (late Belle Houle), her mother Gabrielle Boucher and her father Gérard Lafontaine.

She leaves to mourn her children Renée (Daniel Archambault), Marc (Julie Rochefort), Robert Jean (Christian Gagné-Cholette) and François (Sophie Migneault), her grandchildren Pascale, Bernard, Mélanie, Antoine (Mathilde Therrien Quintal), Raphaël, Eliot, Flavie, Olivier (Camille Coudé), Mathieu (Diana Nan), Laurent (Megan Parker), her great-grandsons Éli and Théo, her sister Lucy Lafontaine (Jean Cossette) as well as her sisters-in-law Madeleine Vézina (late Claude Tellier) and Michèle Vézina. She will also be missed by her numerous nephews, nieces, and other relatives and friends.

Born in Westmount where she grew up with her parents, Monique Lafontaine Vézina obtained her university degree in Arts from Marianopolis College, affiliated at the time with the Université de Montréal. After raising her four children with generosity and dedication, she returned to school to receive a bachelor’s degree in art history at the Université de Montréal. She was also involved in the community, among other things, as a guide at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and then as president of the guides’ association. She was passionate about traveling, playing bridge and cultural outings, and supported her husband in the management of the Domaine Monbel family estate at Lac Stukely in the Eastern Townships.

During the last years of her life, she devoted herself to caring for her husband. She died of an illness she had been battling for several years.

The funeral service will take place on Wednesday, January 24 at 4 p.m. at the Mount-Royal Funeral Complex, 1297, Chemin de la Forêt, Outremont. Before the ceremony, the family will receive condolences starting at 3 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the MUHC Foundation (oncology) or to the Montreal Children’s Hospital Foundation would be appreciated.



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Historical Association takes third look at library on eve of its 125th

More than books at the Westmount Public Library

BY RALPH THOMPSON

The Westmount Historical Association (WHA) presented the last of its 2023 fall lecture series, “Treasures of the Archives,” on November 23. The series is focussed on the Westmount Public Library in advance of its 125th anniversary year, 2024.

Wendy Wayling, children’s librarian, welcomed a sold-out gathering (also live-streamed) and Louise Carpentier, WHA president, introduced the speaker, Lora Baiocco, who first joined the library as a student and took up the post of online services and archives librarian in 2007.

The library is one of the oldest municipally funded libraries in Canada and has today a vast archive collection comprising 137 art works, 1,306 photographs, 40,000 postcards, 33 boxes of documents and letters, and 169 historical items.

From boxed to digitized

Baiocco showed just a few of the photographs in the collection (now digitized for presentation), which, like other items, had been just stored in boxes for decades.

A small collection of professionally created photographs of the library taken between 1910 to 1920 provided an authentic reference for the 1995 restoration project.

The postcards, including those that played an important role in the dating scene long before the internet, were collected by the library through requests to citizens. The Sabourin Collection includes “Sunday Suitor” postcards that were sent to the potential apple of one’s eye to establish a romantic meeting, which would have been only allowed on Sundays under the watchful gaze of parents.

Other postcards showed professionally taken photographs of couples on vacation in exotic locations, a thriving business

before smartphones with cameras.

Original inventory ledger

The documents collection includes many fascinating items including the original ledger listing every book that the library purchased; the Cutter classification that was established; an 1898 *Book of the People* with an entry about W. D. Lighthall, the former mayor (1900 to 1903) who championed the construction of the Westmount Public Library, with multiple handwritten corrections by himself; and many other intriguing works.

One of the most interesting is *A Collection of Original Etchings of Rembrandt, Claude and Others*, which includes notes by Lighthall to his friend and apparent collector Eden Picken.

Extensive research by art historians and art experts gathered by Baiocco shows that these were not original etchings as claimed, but re-strikes printed by three other publishers and not all genuine.

The original plates and etchings were tracked and re-strikes with worn plates are clearly visible in the so-called Picken collection.

Two etchings have been identified as fakes.

The collection of letters includes one from Michael Ondaatje expressing his honour to be included amongst the authors engraved into the restored windows in 1995 and insightful letters about the functioning of the library during the Great Depression and World War II by former librarian and historian Elizabeth Jenkins.

Baiocco talked about the collection of artwork including the three original watercolours by J. H. Macnaughton purchased by the city for \$50 in 1897. A discussion ensued about the missing painting of the Hurlbise House.

During questions and answers, a gentleman enquired of the whereabouts of the archives held deep in the basement of city hall in a bank-sized vault. It was not clear where the contents are today.

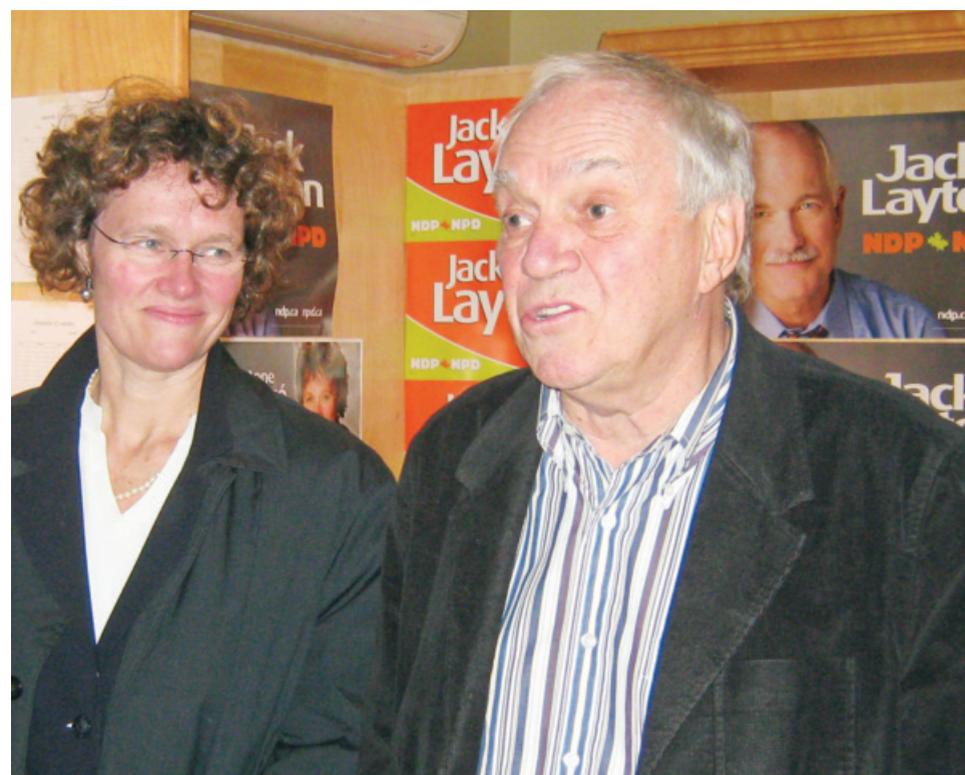
Much of the library archives have not been digitized but for those interested in the artwork, they should enquire at the front desk. Some of the paintings are hung in the library; and take a look at the touch table in the entranceway and also the library Flickr account on flickr (flickr.com/bibliowestmount).

WHA president Louise Carpentier and *The Westmount Historian* editor Caroline Breslaw thanked Baiocco for the presentation and reminded everyone that the WHA’s winter/spring series will start in February.



Speaker Lora Baiocco, online services and archives librarian, shows one of the photographs in the library archives. The description implies that Mrs. V. Harisay is the subject and the photographer, but it is unlikely that she took the photograph herself, said Baiocco.

Remembering Ed Broadbent in Westmount



Former NDP leader Ed Broadbent died January 11. The *Independent* covered a visit of his to Westmount during the federal election of 2008 (see October 14-15, 2008, p. 3). He was supporting former CBC reporter Anne Lagacé Dowson, left, whose campaign for the Westmount-Ville Marie seat (as it then was) had begun as a by-election following the resignation of Lucienne Robillard, but was swept up by a general election. Marc Garneau ended up winning the seat. During a brief, friendly interview, Broadbent joked with the press that he would tell them “everything he knew in seven minutes.”

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.



A woman arrived just before the start of the presentation in the Westmount Room, possibly a colourful future archive photograph showing the diversity of WHA enthusiasts – including cyclists.

St. Margaret's residents, patients enjoy Christmas concert



Charles Gregory plays violin while music therapist Alexandra Hadjis Chartrand accompanies him on guitar during their concert at the St. Margaret Day Centre December 15.

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Residents of the St. Margaret Residential Centre as well as Alzheimer's patients who receive therapy at the St. Margaret Day Centre, also on Hillside Ave., got a musical treat a few weeks before Christmas.

Charles Gregory, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's about two years ago, goes to the centre once a week, according to Suzanne Gregory, his spouse.

Thanks to an organization called Entraide Bénévole Metro, which offers services to seniors, he also receives musical therapy sessions at home with guitarist Alexandra Hadjis Chartrand.

She came up with the idea of organizing a small Christmas concert on the afternoon of December 15. It also happens that Charles' sister is living at the residence as she also suffers from dementia.

Charles studied violin and piano at Oxford University in England. His father, Cyril Gregory, was the first French horn player in the London Symphony Orchestra.

Cyril played for the queen and the royal family, among others, and so music also became part of Charles' life.

During the concert, Charles played his violin, while Alexandra played her guitar and sang.

Batshaw Foundation names actress Issa as its first ambassador

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

The Westmount-based Batshaw Foundation, which provides support to clients of Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, recently named Canadian television and film actress Ayisha Issa as its first-ever ambassador.

Born and raised on Montreal's West Island, she has appeared in English- and French-language television series and films over the past 13 years.

Issa currently portrays Dr. June Curtis in *Transplant*, a CTV medical drama now in its fourth season. She won a 2022 Canadian Screen Award for best supporting actress in a drama for her role in the series.

A Batshaw Youth and Family Centres client during her adolescent years when she lived at one point in a group home overseen by Batshaw, Issa, now 39, proved to be resilient in spite of challenges, taking part in sports while finishing her studies.

An initial though unsuccessful attempt to launch a modeling career led her into acting, as well as the martial arts. She holds a brown belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, winning top rankings in her weight class at Brazi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF BATSHAW FOUNDATION.

lian Jiu-Jitsu Federation events.

"We are delighted to welcome Ayisha to the Batshaw Foundation," said Wendy Khan, executive-director of the Batshaw Foundation on Werendale Park.

"Her extraordinary journey, commitment, perseverance and vision make her a uniquely qualified advocate for at-risk youth. Ayisha is an inspiration to everyone at Batshaw."



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Pierrette Sévigny remembers ... when her dog attacked President Kennedy



*Westmount
Remembers*

CRAIG CORMAC



Pierrette Sévigny and her husband, the late Richard McConomy. PHOTO COURTESY OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY.

The honourable Pierrette Sévigny has lived a life of service. She served the public for 16 years and 9 months as a judge for the Quebec Superior Court. Before that, she worked with her husband, the late Richard McConomy (see August 25, 2020, p. 9), as a lawyer in the field of conflict resolution. I had the opportunity to interview Pierrette about her family, early life and some of the people she met along the way. Here is what she had to say.

Where were you born?

P.S. I was born in Montreal. My parents were the honourable Pierre Sévigny (the one-time defense minister in the Diefenbaker government) and Mrs. Corinne Kernin Sévigny. My grandparents on both sides were of Irish and French-Canadian heritage.

Where were your parents married?

P.S. My parents were married in Murray Bay, about an hour away from Quebec City, the summer destination of well-to-do Quebecers and Americans. They were married in Quebec City and moved to Montreal after the wedding because my mother and father wanted to establish themselves independently.

Did you grow up in Westmount?

P.S. Absolutely, 33 Rosemount Ave. I was born at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

And where did you go to school?

P.S. I went to the Convent for the Sacred Heart for both primary and secondary education, on the corner of Atwater and Penfield. I went to Loyola College for my first level of undergraduate education. I went to McGill University later for law school because my husband was going to law school first (he was two years ahead of me). So, he finished, got his bars and then it was my turn. We did it this way because we had to support each other. In the interim, I worked at Westmount High School teaching French and history. Teaching at Westmount High was a great experience. I really enjoyed working with the kids in high school.

You told me an interesting story about how your dog reacted to meeting President Kennedy could you share it again?

P.S. Well, Zoey was a well-endowed boxer. She was sleek and beautiful. She was the family dog, but she was really my dog. So, my father had been asked by the honourable John Diefenbaker to attend the landing of JFK and his wife at CFB

Uplands in Ottawa, as was the tradition at the time. So, my dad agreed to go to greet JFK and Jackie. I was in my early teens at the time. Everyone knew who they were. They were the rock stars of that generation.

I begged my father to allow me to go with him to meet them. He agreed, and then I asked if we could bring along Zoey. He said, "God, Pierrette, please.... Well, okay, you can bring Zoey along."

So, Zoey got into the huge black car with my father and myself, and I was all prepared and properly dressed and decked out (no school uniform, no jeans) for the event.

So, we get to Uplands Airport and it is really a small airport. At the airport was the RCMP awaiting the president along with the ramp and it was really quite impressive.

So, Zoey's with me, she doesn't stray, and I had her on a leash. All of a sudden,

we hear on the intercom, "The president's plane is within five minutes of arrival." And then three minutes of arrival, and then two minutes of arrival. It was a gorgeous plane, Airforce One.

So sure enough, the door opens and down comes President Kennedy with Mrs. Kennedy following, and at the same time I lose control of Zoey, who immediately raced towards the president coming down the ramp.

I was so embarrassed. Words do not suffice.

Zoey immediately grabbed on to his pant legs and she didn't let go. I got involved and went to grab Zoey and told her she was a bad dog and the president said, "Oh miss, it's okay. We have dogs, and we understand."

I said, "Sir, I would be happy to pay for the repair of your pants." He said, "You don't have to worry, sweetie. We'll take care

of it ourselves." I said, "Are you sure?" He said, "no problem."

How was your dad with all of this?

P.S. He was mortified: by his daughter losing control of Zoey, and Zoey proceeding to grab the president's pant legs and tearing the pants. I will never forget it; I was so embarrassed. The president was exceedingly nice and did not make me feel badly.

And what did Jackie do?

P.S. Jackie was laughing, and she kept saying, "Young lady, don't worry. It does happen." She said, "Don't worry we'll cover you with your dad."

Did the prime minister find out?

P.S. He did eventually. He never said anything to me, but he probably wasn't happy about it.

My dad said, "My God, Pierrette!" I said, "I am so sorry." He said, "What's done is done, but it was a good thing to offer to pay for the repairs, but sweetie you are not going to pay to have President Kennedy's pants re-done."

I looked around and I noticed there were a whole bunch of Secret Service guys with guns drawn because I had approached the president to stop Zoey. I said, "Zoey, we better get out of here before we get shot," laughing. The Secret Service were very nice and very polite, they said, "Young lady, you are lucky." And I said, "Don't I know it."

Why did Zoey go for his pant legs?

P.S. Because she always went for pant legs. She was just playing. The president knew she was just playing and so did Jackie because they were dog owners themselves. Jackie even said that Zoey was a great dog. President Kennedy said, "Zoey, you have embarrassed your master."

Did you see President Kennedy after that?

No, he went off with the RCMP and my dad.

What year was this?

1962.

It wasn't long after that we lost the president.

P.S. That's right

At Sacred Heart, the head nun made the announcement that JFK had been assassinated and she said, "Our prayers are with him and the family." I was in the middle of a chemistry exam and they cancelled everything for the three days following.

He was an incredible man; he had a strong presence.

I enjoyed my time in Ottawa and Montreal. Being a minister's daughter definitely had enormous advantages and some disadvantages. I had the opportunity to travel to South America and other destinations and we met many fascinating people.



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Low typical price, low volume

December sales: Good riddance



Real Estate

ANDY DODGE

Note: The following article relates to offers to purchase Westmount residential dwellings that were reported by local real estate agents as having been accepted in December 2023. Because they are not final registered sales, the addresses cannot be made public, but give a good idea of current trends in local real estate activity. The graph at right offers a picture of these trends over time.

Real estate agents might be forgiven if they offer a relieved farewell to 2023, which started off nicely but has suffered from the continued growth of mortgage rates (BMO 2-year rate: 6.2 percent in mid-May, now 7.7 percent), preventing many buyers from looking at million-dollar homes in Westmount.

With only four single-family home sales in Westmount in December, there was little hope of a turn-around in a market that has been in a steady slide since last August.

The extremes in a weak market were exemplified by two houses on Sherbrooke St.: one that sold for \$900,000 and 27 percent below municipal valuation, while another sold over \$3 million and 51 percent above valuation – the extremes both in prices and ratios.

Volume was the lowest it has been since December of 2013; several times in Decembers and Januaries the volume has been this low, but never lower.

Three condominiums also sold in December, bringing the volume in the fourth quarter to six, with prices as high as \$5,700,000 for one of Westmount's high-rise penthouse apartments, the highest price ever (according to our records) for a condominium, though in fact this was less than its valuation.

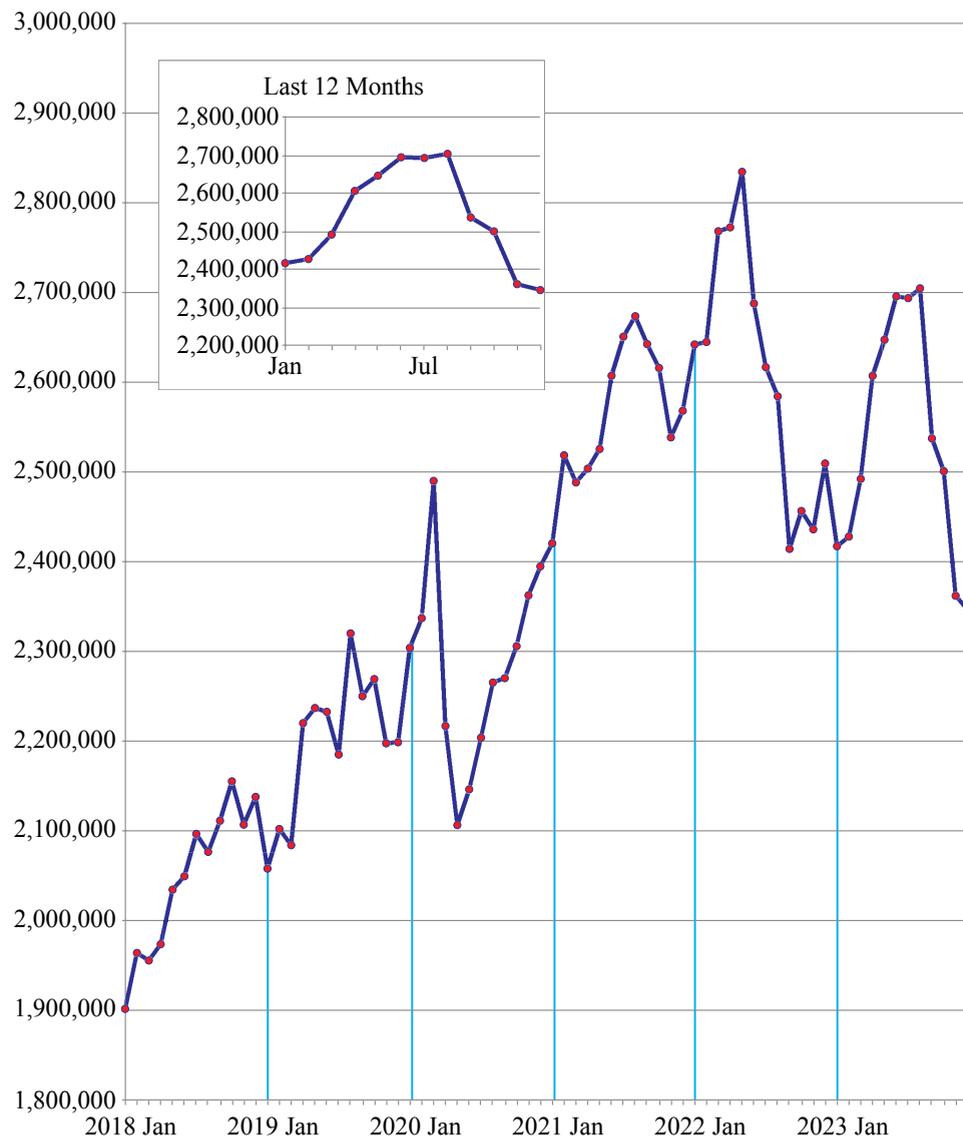
In fact, four of the six condos went below the tax assessment, and the quarterly average of -3.2 percent was the first time since 2016 that the quarterly ratio has been negative. Two other condos sold in the range of \$2 million each and the other three were all under \$1 million.

Sales in adjacent-Westmount were equally sparse, with one house each on the western, northern and eastern edges of Westmount. Perhaps most notable is the sale of one more house on Roslyn Ave. north of the city limits, bringing to nine the number that have sold there in the past two years, for prices ranging from \$1,150,000 to \$1,900,000.

Number of listings down

With the wind-down of the fall season, listings at the beginning of January have tailed off dramatically, to 74 from 85 a month ago and from 97 two months ago. Those that have been removed from the market are mainly in the \$2 to \$3 million grouping, and in fact one more house has entered the \$5-to-\$10 million group. The number of Westmount houses for rent has

Average adjusted price for 'typical' Westmount house, by month, January 2018 to December 2023, based on accepted offer dates



dropped, too, but 42 homes were rented during 2023, slightly above average for a year.

Here's wishing all of you a successful 2024 and plenty of sales no matter where the market moves.

Westmount Park School 'chaos'

The school bus drivers' strike created "chaos" on Park Place near Westmount Park School on January 11, according to one resident, as parents drove children to and from school instead of putting them on the bus. "I just wanted to mention that there were a lot of impatient drivers and a lot of honking!" he added in a follow-up email the next day. – WI.

Protest, prayer at Israeli consulate

Pro-Palestinian protestors gathered at Wood Ave. and St. Catherine St. January 6, as they have done many times since the advent of war between Israel and Hamas last year. The Israeli consulate is located in Westmount Square's office tower. According to one source, this time many protestors were on their knees, seeming to pray for peace. – WI.



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Iranian rights activist addresses Women's Canadian Club

BY MARTIN C. BARRY



Homa Hoodfar addressed the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal in Victoria Hall on November 21.

present, what people choose or refuse to wear often becomes a political statement.

"In the French Revolution, right after the revolution, they spent so much time discussing whether women had the right to wear pants or not," she said.

As such, she said that what people wear can become political, "and imposing it on women – or men – is taking away their right and their dignity as to how they want to present themselves to the public."

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Why has resistance to the hijab by a growing number of Iranian women become so important in a country where Islamic fundamentalism has dominated politics for nearly 45 years?

As Concordia University social anthropologist and emeritus professor Homa Hoodfar told the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal, many women willingly supported the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, even though the rights they had secured over the previous century were suppressed by Sharia law.

Hoodfar was arrested in 2016 in Iran, where she faced charges of violating prescriptions placed on feminist activism and security protocols. She was released in September that year after 112 days of detention and intense interrogation.

Speaking in Victoria Hall on November 21 about the ambitions of a group of like-minded women to create a bill of rights for women in the Middle East, she said Sharia law made the hijab (the traditional Islamic head covering for women) compulsory, while also making an impact on family law.

How women dress has been one of the most fundamental changes brought about since the arrival of Sharia law, said Hoodfar.

"Every time someone tells you what you can wear, what colour you can wear, how you can present yourself in public, is taking away from your dignity," she said, referring to the enforced wearing of the hijab in Iran.

She said that she and other women who support the women's rights bill object to bans on the hijab in western countries as much as the enforcement of wearing it in Iran, because "what they are doing is taking away the choice for women."

She suggested that in the past as in the





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NEXT COUNCIL
MEETING

Monday, February 5



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Appel aux candidatures : Comité consultatif pour l'environnement et le développement durable

La Ville recherche des résidents et des défenseurs de la communauté ayant de l'expérience et de l'intérêt pour les enjeux environnementaux et de durabilité pour son nouveau comité. La date limite pour présenter une candidature est le 31 janvier. Visitez westmount.org pour tous les détails.

Emplois d'été 2024 à Westmount

Posez votre candidature au plus tard le 31 janvier. Visitez westmount.org/emplois-dete.

Carte d'accès aux installations 2024

Demandez votre carte en ligne ou en personne au Centre des loisirs de Westmount. Deux preuves de résidence sont requises. westmount.org

Protégez-vous contre la fraude

Les arnaques, le vol d'identité et les autres activités frauduleuses sont à la hausse au Canada. Des centaines de millions de dollars sont perdus chaque année en raison de ces crimes. Tout le monde est à risque. Adoptez des bonnes habitudes pour vous protéger et sachez quoi faire si vous êtes victime d'une fraude. Visitez westmount.org pour en savoir plus.



Snow removal reminders

Help us clean your street quickly. Avoid placing your waste materials on the sidewalk or on the street, and make sure to follow the temporary parking restrictions during snow operations.

Call for applications: Environment and Sustainability Committee

The City is seeking residents and community advocates with experience and an interest in environmental and sustainability issues for a new committee. The deadline to present a candidacy is January 31. Visit westmount.org for all of the details.

2024 Summer jobs in Westmount

Apply on or before January 31. Find out more at westmount.org/summerjobs.

2024 Facility Membership Card

Apply for your card online or in person at the Westmount Recreation Centre. Two proofs of residence are required. westmount.org

Protect yourself from fraud

Scams, identity theft, and other fraudulent activity is on the rise in Canada. Millions of dollars are lost to these crimes each year. Everyone is at risk. Adopt safe habits to protect yourself, and know what to do if you become a victim of fraud. Visit westmount.org to find out more.

BIBLIOTHÈQUE ET ÉVÉNEMENTS COMMUNAUTAIRES

125^e anniversaire de la Bibliothèque

En 2024, nous fêtons le 125^e anniversaire de la Bibliothèque publique de Westmount, un endroit unique qui joue un rôle important dans notre communauté. Restez à l'affût des annonces d'événements spéciaux et préparez-vous à célébrer avec nous!

Concours littéraire McEntyre 2024

Pour souligner le 125^e anniversaire de la BPW, nous t'invitons à écrire au sujet des bibliothèques, des livres et des mots, comme si la bibliothèque nous parlait. Cette année, la date limite pour participer est le dimanche 24 mars.



Galerie du Victoria Hall — exposition

Du 19 janvier au 16 février. Œuvres de Sara Colby. Vernissage le 18 janvier à 18 h. Bienvenue à toutes et à tous.

Ciné-club — Living (2022)

Mardi 23 janvier, 14 h, Victoria Hall. En anglais. Réalisé par Oliver Hermanus, avec Bill Nighy. Inscrivez-vous à westlib.org.

Lecture de A à Z avec Sherry

Les samedis de 10 h 30 à 11 h 30, du 27 janvier au 24 février, Bibliothèque. En anglais. Un nouveau programme de lecture interactive pour favoriser l'amour de la lecture. Pour les enfants de 5 à 7 ans et leurs parents ou gardiens. Inscrivez-vous à westlib.org.

Parlons opéra! — La Reine-garçon

Dimanche 28 janvier, 14 h, Victoria Hall. En collaboration avec l'Opéra de Montréal. Inscrivez-vous à westlib.org.

Club de Scrabble (10 à 13 ans)

Les mardis de 16 h à 17 h 30, du 30 janvier au 27 février, Bibliothèque. Ce club te permettra de perfectionner tes compétences et de maîtriser l'art du jeu des mots. Inscrivez-vous à westlib.org.

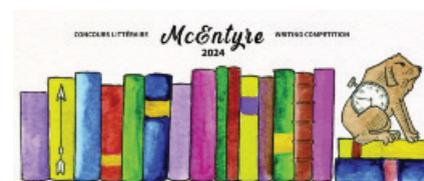
Carnaval d'hiver les 1, 2 et 3 février

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LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

125th Anniversary of the Library

In 2024, we are celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Westmount Public Library, a special place that plays such a large role in our community. Watch for special event announcements and get ready to celebrate with us!



2024 McEntyre Literary Competition

To celebrate the 125th anniversary of the WPL, we invite you to write about libraries, books, and words, as if the library is actually speaking to us! This year's deadline to participate is Sunday, March 24.

Gallery at Victoria Hall — exhibition

January 19 to February 16. Works by Sara Colby. Vernissage January 18 at 6 p.m. Everyone welcome.

Film Club — Living (2022)

Tuesday, January 23, 2 p.m., Victoria Hall. Directed by Oliver Hermanus, and featuring Bill Nighy. Register at westlib.org.

Reading A to Z with Miss Sherry

Saturdays from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. from January 27 to February 24, Library. A new interactive reading program to foster a lifelong love for reading. For children ages 5 to 7 and their parents or guardians. Register at westlib.org.

Let's Talk Opera! — La Reine-garçon

Sunday, January 28, 2 p.m., Victoria Hall. In collaboration with l'Opéra de Montréal. Register at westlib.org.

Scrabble Club (10 to 13 yr olds)

Tuesdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m., January 30 to February 27, Library. This club will help you hone your skills and master the art of wordplay. Register at westlib.org.

Winter Carnival Feb 1, 2 & 3

Save the dates and watch your mailbox for the activity schedule.



Barbara Moore (1927-2023)

Former public safety commissioner remembered for her volunteer achievements regarding accessibility, municipal quality-of-life

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Long-time community volunteer in Westmount and former city councillor Barbara Dorrington Moore is being remembered for forging new ground in accessibility and environmental services and for dedicating much of her life to “walking the talk” of community service. She died December 18 at the age of 96.

Characterized by a quick and friendly smile, she served on or chaired numerous community committees including the former Healthy City Project’s Community Life/Environment subcommittee. She was a member of the 1999 city council, during which she was commissioner of public safety and chair of the Westmount Public Library board.



Barbara Moore flashing her “famous smile” on election night November 7, 1999.

In 1998, she was honoured by the province for many years of volunteerism and community leadership with its Mérite Municipal award for the Montreal region.

In nominating her for the recognition, the city’s submission stated that “this outstanding community leader has been involved in so many pertinent projects over the last 35 years that one can truly say her impact has made a difference in Westmount’s well-being.” It added that she had “earned the respect of the community and of city officials for her competence, thoroughness of her research and her ability to speak out frankly and tactfully.”

Barbara Moore also received the Queen’s Jubilee Medal in 2002, and the Westmount Municipal Association’s Derek Walker volunteer of the year award in 2008.

“It gives me a great deal of satisfaction,” she had told the *Independent* at that time in explaining the value of service as being “to see a need and get into it” (see profile, April 29, 2008, p. 14).

‘Fine example’

“She was a fine example of an effective politician and a person dedicated to the quality of life in the community,” explained Tom Thompson, who served with her on both the city’s Healthy City Project, which he headed, and the city council.

Moore was the founder and organizer of the city’s former Smart Living Day events and the Safe Walk Audit, a neighbourhood street-safe project. Both were singled out in the Quebec award as models for implementation in other communities.

One of the achievements of which she was most proud, however, was a comprehensive project to compile a survey on the accessibility of public buildings and stores in Westmount. This has now been taken over and is maintained by the city’s admin-

istration as an annex to the city’s Accessibility Report submitted annually to Quebec.

“Barbara considered accessibility as a need not only of seniors but of many others such as parents pushing strollers,” Thompson noted.

Chaired many committees

Among her many other roles and contributions to numerous organizations were chairing the school committee of Westmount High, the advisory council of the Westmount Y and serving on Roslyn School’s organizing committee for its 70th year celebration.

She was also a vice-president of the Westmount Municipal Association and a member of the board of the CLSC Guy Metro, and served many years as treasurer of the Mountainside United Church and its many committees.

Financial administrator

A retired financial administrator, Moore was an avid tennis player at the Mount

Royal Tennis Club, through which she met her future husband, Herbert Moore. He shared her interest in the library committee, which he chaired before she did.

“She loved Westmount Park,” recalled her daughter, Wendy, who had strolled there with her mother in November. She had lived much of her life on Lansdowne near the park and later at Manoir Westmount before moving to another seniors’ residence.

Born Barbara Clements May 16, 1927, she attended Westmount High, obtained a BA from McGill, and later a graduate diploma in institutional administration from Concordia. She became financial manager for the Mackay Centre before retiring in 1987.

She is survived by her children Robin, Lynn, Wendy and Geoffrey as well as eight grandchildren, four great grandchildren and her sister Caroline (Clements) Davis. A celebration of her life is planned for Saturday, May 25 at 2 pm at Westmount Park United Church.



Barbara Moore being sworn in as a city councillor November 16, 1999.

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Tim Price (1957-2023)

Former finance commissioner remembered as a key fundraiser for WRC

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Friends, family and colleagues of former Westmount city councillor Tim Price are remembering him as a dedicated Westmounter who was a key player in the financing of the Westmount recreation centre project, following Price's death a few days before Christmas.

According to an obituary published by his family, Timothy Evan Price died peacefully on the morning of December 21, following a long but valiant battle with cancer. "His thoughtful and positive demeanour remained intact until the very end as he said goodbye to his family and friends," they said.

He was born in Montreal on September 20, 1957, the eldest of Tom and Merne Price's three children. He grew up in the Town of Mount Royal, spending weekends in the Eastern Townships at his grandparents' farm and summers in the Lower St. Lawrence at their family home at Métis sur Mer.

He started his career working for an investment firm in London, England before qualifying as an accountant in Toronto and Bermuda.

He later joined the Montreal investment firm MacDougall, MacDougall & MacTier, where he held a number of positions including president, CEO and eventually



Then councillor Tim Price in January 2010.

PHOTO: LAUREEN SWEENEY.

chairman, before the firm was acquired by Raymond James.

He served one term on Westmount city council, from 2009 to 2013. He may best be remembered during that period for

leading a campaign to raise more than \$12 million in private donations to help fund the more than \$40 million WRC project.

In an interview with the *Independent*, former mayor Peter Trent recalled the

efforts that he and former city councillor David Laidley made to recruit Tim Price for Trent's team for the 2009 municipal elections. It paid off after Price became the commissioner for finance.

"He was very involved with the arena fundraising and we would never have raised the amount we did if Tim weren't around," Trent said. "He did a fantastic job of the fundraising, and he really believed in the arena. He was very, very keen."

Trent described Tim Price as someone who always behaved in a thoughtful, reserved and ethical manner and who earned the respect of virtually everyone. "The reason I think he did so well in raising the WRC money was that people just believed in him," said Trent.

Former city councillor Patrick Martin worked alongside Price as the elected official in charge of engineering on the WRC project. "He had enormous professional experience in finance and investments and fundraising," he said. "So, we'll really miss him not just for that – we'll also miss his smile."

Tim Price is survived by his wife, Denise, his children, Tom and Chella, and his siblings, Karma (John) and Brian (Meg). A funeral took place on January 9 at the Church of St. Andrew & St. Paul downtown. He will be buried at the family's summer home in Métis in July.

Police Report

One attempted break-in, three car theft incidents since January 1

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Police at Station 12 on Stanton St. report there was one attempted household break-in and three car-theft incidents in Westmount since the beginning of the new year.

The owner of a house on Victoria Ave. came home around 1:30 pm on January 2 after being out for a few hours. He found

that a glass window on the outer door of a rear entrance had been shattered, apparently by someone who attempted to break in.

However, the inner door of the entrance hadn't been damaged, leading the police to believe the perpetrator probably gave up rather than try to get past the second door.

"They tried to get in, but they didn't succeed," said Cst. Mike Yigit, Station 12's

community relations officer.

Many older houses have double-door entrance configurations. While he agreed this often can be useful security-wise, he added that it's important to make sure both doors are securely locked.

"Some people will lock the exterior one and not the interior one," said Yigit. "Locking both is something that should become a habit." He also noted that a door without any glass window at all is one of the best ways to maximize security.

4Runner stolen

On January 5, the owner of a Toyota 4Runner mid-size SUV, parked on Bruce Ave. in lower Westmount, reported that the vehicle had been stolen overnight.

"It's the old story: he parked the car outside his home, and the next morning he noticed it was gone," said Cst. Yigit.

RAV4 stolen

In a second car theft incident since the start of the year, a Toyota RAV4 that had been stolen on Wellington Ave. in Point St.

Charles during the evening of January 6 was recovered during the early hours the following day on Sunnyside Ave. in upper Westmount.

(Police officials have acknowledged that it has become the practice of many car theft professionals to steal vehicles from one location in a city and then to abandon them somewhere else, while waiting to see if concealed on-board geo-location devices lead investigators to the stolen cars.)

In this particular case, according to Cst. Yigit, investigating officers at Station 12 received a call from the Toyota RAV4 owner's vehicle tracking service that an active "tag" placed in the car had succeeded in locating it on Sunnyside.

2nd RAV4 stolen

Finally, in a third recent car-theft incident, this time on January 9, yet another RAV4 was stolen on Prince Albert Ave. According to the police report, the owner had parked between 4 and 5 pm. Upon returning, she saw the vehicle was no longer there.

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Personal view

Tim Price (1957-2023): Family man, networker, business leader

By DAVID PRICE, EDITOR

Tim Price and I were second cousins, meaning our grandfathers were brothers. While this made us members of the same family generation (brothers, then first cousins, then second cousins), we were members of very different demographic and cultural ones. He was born right in the middle of the Baby Boom and I was born in the centre of the Baby Bust, making me a Gen Xer.

Indeed, he was almost old enough to be my father. For this reason, I did not have anything to do with him growing up, but when, as a teenager with a newly minted Canadian Securities Course certificate, it came time to look for summer work, I reached out to him, a former controller and then money manager at the retail brokerage firm of MacDougall, MacDougall & MacTier (usually known as “3 Macs”).

Although I was basically a stranger, he was immediately helpful and obtained for me my first “real job” – moving paper client-application forms from being in piles to being in their very own folders – literal paper pushing.

It was not the mail room so common in many business origin stories, but it nevertheless gave my career beginning a certain Horatio Alger poetry.

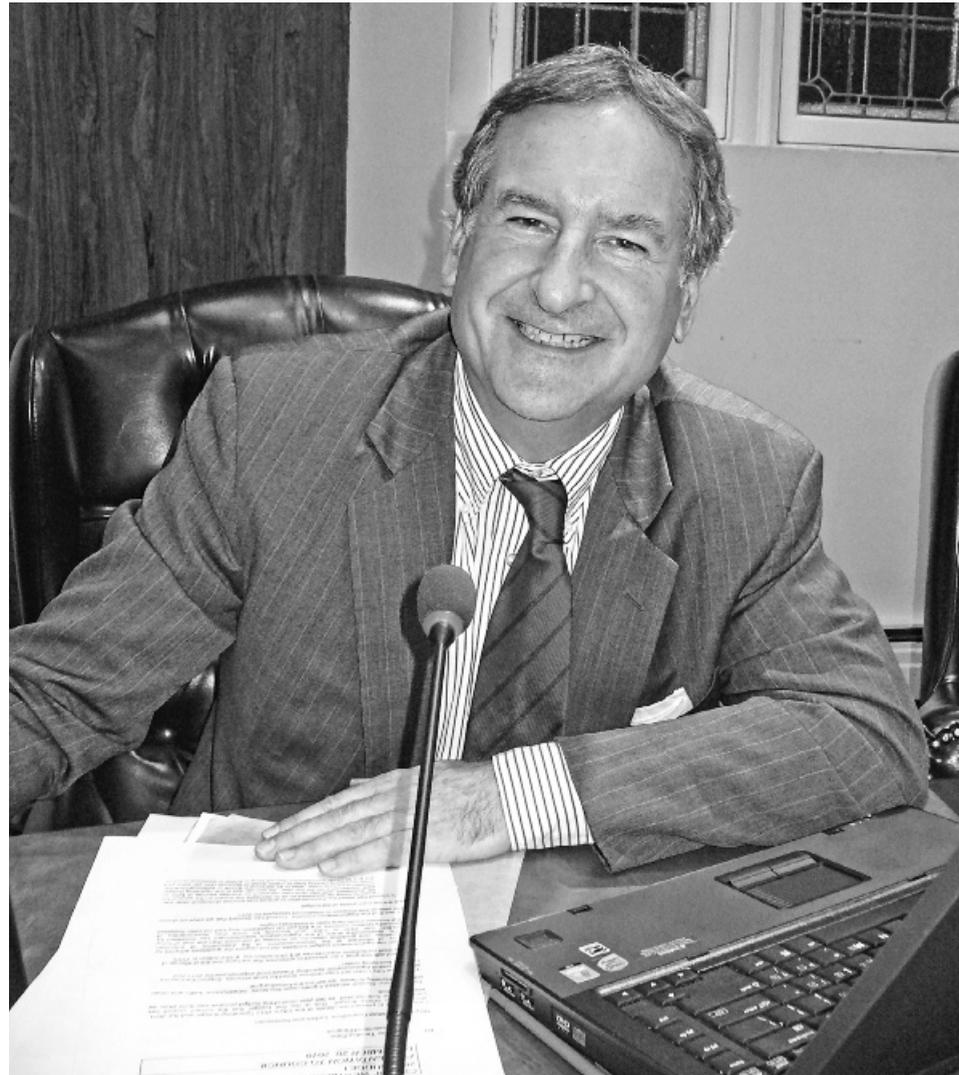
More importantly, it gave me a start in the finance business, including the opportunity over the next two summers to work on the firm’s equity and bond trading desks, which was probably the most fun job that I have ever had.

That door was opened for me by another Westmouter – Michael Harrison (thank you, Michael) – but I would not have met him without the first opportunity (thank you again, Tim).

Despite being relatively young at the time (30s), Tim was well regarded at the firm and, from where I sat, was looked on as a leader, all the while without losing any of his personality. (Sure enough, he would later become CEO and chairman.)

I remember once being in the elevator with him and one of the older assistants commented favourably on his hard-to-miss yellow socks, but “The only issue is that they don’t match your shirt.” Without missing a beat, Tim re-adjusted the pocket square in the chest pocket of his suit jacket, which was a perfectly matching shade of yellow! I am not known for my interest or excellence in things sartorial, but I always thought that was a smooth move: funny, unrehearsed and executed in a self-deprecatory way.

I am unsurprised that his good reputa-



Then councillor Tim Price presenting the city’s budget in December 2010. “I think Lauren’s photo has caught his smile and laugh perfectly,” said his cousin David Price, “and I also see that the original caption encapsulated his approach to budgetting: ‘There were no new shoes for finance commissioner Tim Price because they weren’t needed, he said, consistent with the spirit of the city’s 2011 budget.’”

PHOTO: LAUREEN SWEENEY.

tion went beyond his own firm. When Tim died last month, a money manager at another company who had never worked with him – i.e. a *competitor* – wrote me to say, “He was a great guy, who I admired very much ... I looked up to him, and appreciated his guidance and kind leadership.”

Family man

Tim was a consummate family man, working for many years with his father, the late Tom Price, and being a key organizer over four decades of five 200-person-or-so reunions for our very large extended family.

Tim started his own family late in life, marrying Denise Burke, with whom he had children Tom, who now also works at the 3 Macs division of Raymond James, and Chella. Their moving speeches at his funeral last week were testimony to his

sober budgetting, which would be memorialized after each meeting in his tidy, crisp handwriting. I am sure that he brought the same prudence, care and attention to municipal and charitable matters in his work on their councils and boards – qualities that we could use more of from politicians at all levels in this country.

Tim was also a networker in the best sense of the term, putting other people in touch to their mutual benefit and keeping lines of communication open between geographically (and otherwise) disparate family members. I was unsurprised to read in his obituary that he did this for his high school and university alumni organizations too.

It was at a networking-esque event that I last saw him. 3 Macs had a large reunion in September of last year and I was invited.

(By the way, it is a testament to the deft people skills of all of 3 Macs’ owners and managers that so many employees from all departments showed up for a “firm reunion,” in many cases years after their association with the company or its successor. One participant told me: “I had trouble explaining the concept to a friend. Not many firms have ‘reunions’ – and if they did, who would go?”)

As I left the party, Tim was at the door chatting with some people and I joined the group. Someone commented, “There is a family resemblance.”

To which I said, “I will take that as a compliment.”

Someone then asked, “Who is older?”

To which Tim said with his characteristic laugh, “I will take *that* as a compliment.”

That is how I will remember him: my dapper, yellow-socked “younger” cousin ending a party with a quick repartee.

My condolences to his nuclear family and friends. He will be missed.

skill at the “nuclear” aspect of family life too.

I played a very minor role organizing one reunion. I remember Tim’s realistic,

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9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

Wishing you all a wonderful New Year and that your families are enjoying the company of their companion animals. If you are looking to adopt, please consider shelter animals, who are in such need of homes and families.

As you are reading now and enjoying this photograph of handsome young Hanneton, it would be wonderful if you would consider bringing him home soon.

Hanneton is striking, a sleek pearl-grey shorthair with contrasting gold-shade eyes.

He is presently in a temporary foster home for the Montreal SPCA and they

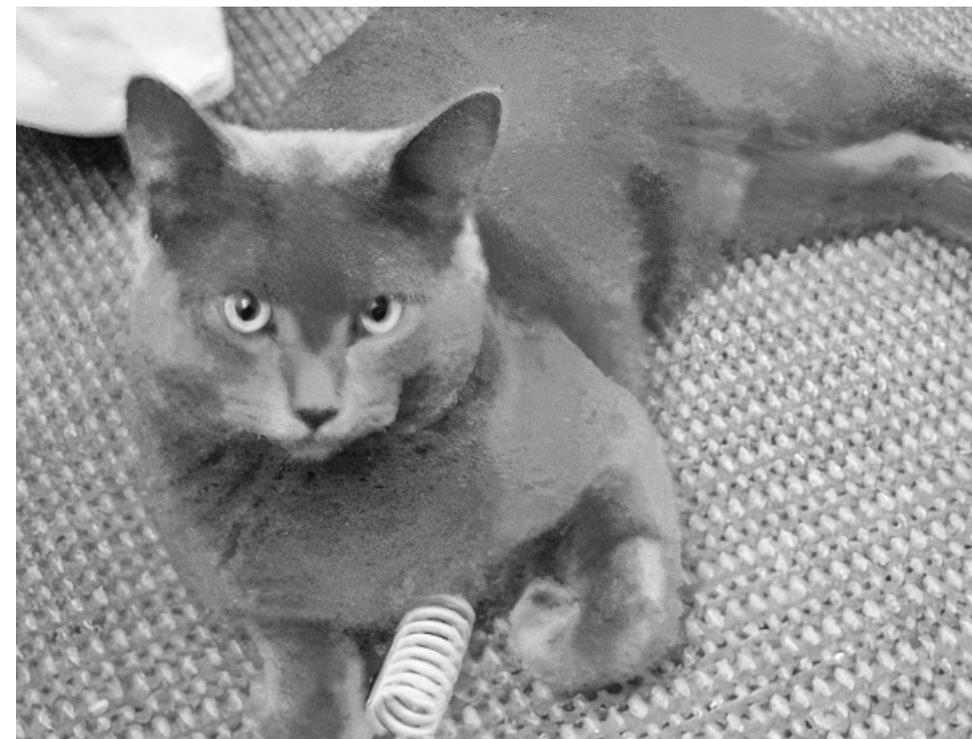
report that he is loving and playful. He is a very healthy two-year-old, up to date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped.

For more information on him, please refer to the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com, scroll to Hanneton's information page by his identification number, 2000048127, then click on the "Fill out the form" black rectangle on the right-hand side of the page.

The adoption coordinators will refer to the contact information you provide through that form in order for a member of their team to contact you to discuss adoption.

Please do not hesitate to start the discussion with them, they will also have more information from the foster family that will be of interest as this stunning grey is very social and affectionate.

Your neighbour, Lysanne



Westmount
A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

Here is Miss Sophia, an adorable petite 10-pound two-tone Shih Tzu. She is presently in a foster family's care for the Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions volunteer animal rescue group.

A sweet and funny companion, she enjoys her walks, playtime with other dogs, sofa sharing and cuddling. She is a very healthy six-year-old, up to date with her

Joyful Sophia

inoculations, spayed and microchipped.

She could join a family with another small- to medium-sized dog or a cat. Not having any background on children, it is best to consider a family with children 10 years and over as she is a small dog.

If you would like more information on precious Sophia, please do not hesitate to contact the volunteers at the rescue at their email address info@gerdysrescue.org, refer to their website at www.gerdysrescue.org and also follow them on their Facebook page.

Your neighbour, Lysanne



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Garbage, cont'd from p. 1

taxes. It was described as a three-year contract with a possible two-year extension.

It compares with the next lowest bid of \$1,417,639 and the existing contract, which Derichebourg won on March 4, 2019 at a cost of \$1,029,693, which was based on the city's traditional collection process.

Better results

"I believe we are moving too quickly with these new measures," Roux said in lengthy comments. "I'm of the opinion that you get better results by getting people excited about something rather than by

coercing them into it. I would have liked us to have taken the time to get a good sense of how residents feel about waste management."

She maintained that "many Westmounters believe that garbage being picked up away from the curb" keeps Westmount's streetscape looking clean. Once it has been picked up, bins are not left lying around.

"Some call it a Westmount tradition and others say it's part of the Westmount DNA. Is this a feeling shared by most residents? I don't know, but it would have been nice to have the answer."

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Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

RMR rings in New Year at armoury



Corporal Hunter Yeung, Corporal Kenton Townsend, Sergeant (ret.) Chung Man Yu, Captain Grant Furholter, Lieutenant-Colonel (ret.) Henry Hall and Captain (ret.) Georges Gohier.

For some, the holidays were full of digital uncoupling. Meetings in person. Face to face, not FaceTime. And of course, parties.

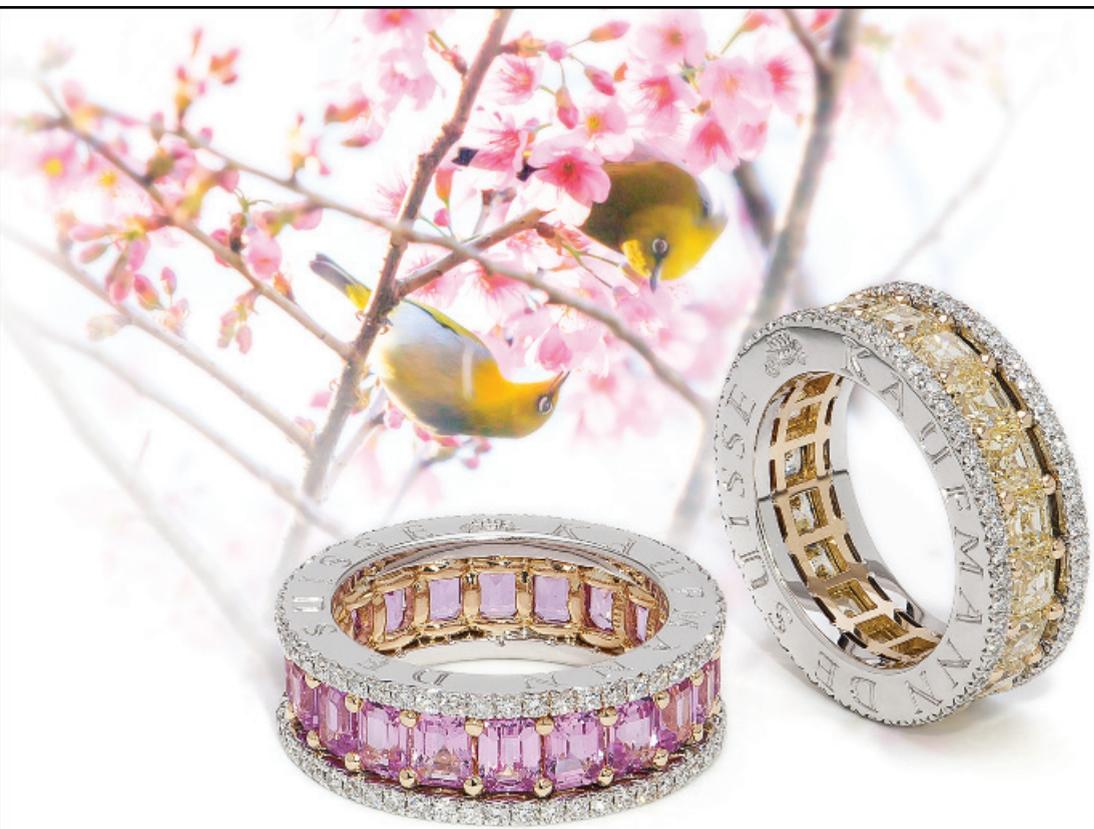
Moving into 2024, many residents were quiet on New Year's Day – possibly seeking relief and respite after The Eve! – but there was an event with distinction.

On a Greek-blue-sky day, I wandered the empty streets to the Westmount armoury, the massive building on St. Catherine east of Lansdowne where soldiers train when not at Camp Valcartier.

I attended a gathering of family, friends and guests at the Royal Montreal Regiment's Levée. It was marked, as noted on the invitation, with "Full court dress uniforms and medals." The sharply dressed gentlemen sported chevrons, bars and stars on their uniforms or suits (if retired).

Present were **Corporal Hunter Yeung, sergeant (ret.) Chung Man Yu, Lieutenant-Colonel (ret.) Henry Hall, Nick Bendzar and Captain (ret.) George Gohier.** The ladies also looked pretty smart.

continued on p. 22



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Social notes, cont'd from p. 21

Senior recruiter **Corporal Kenton Townsend** explained that members of the reserve have full-time jobs or study full time.

“For example, one man is a surgeon, and one lady is a firefighter. She also happens to be a door gunner – which means she sits in the doorway of a helicopter to operate her weapon system.”

(Corporal Townsend gives a free presentation every Tuesday at the RMR, explaining the occupation courses offered and the salaries paid reservists.)

Breakfast was served by the regimental sergeant-major, **Master Warrant Officer James Quesnel**.

The RMR’s customary moose milk was served by **Captain Grant Furholter**.

During the all-day occasion, guests admired portraits of other eras. Celebrated members of the regimental family are thus celebrated in the stately wood-panelled room called the officer’s mess.

Gentle reader, this is another side of my job: discovering new worlds. If it were not for the *Westmount Independent*, I might have missed this mess-side story.

Remembering Richard Samuelson: Opera lover, reader, wit, friend

BY VERONICA REDGRAVE

Long-time Westmounter Richard Samuelson passed away recently. I met Richard at the Met Opera Live. He not only loved opera; he created an Excel sheet comparing conductors, sets, orchestrations and singers. After each performance, he would enthusiastically discuss the production, usually with acerbic-but-relevant observations. I learnt a lot.

(Full disclosure. Soon after meeting Richard he hired my agency to create campaigns for Samuelsohn, the historic menswear firm he co-owned.)

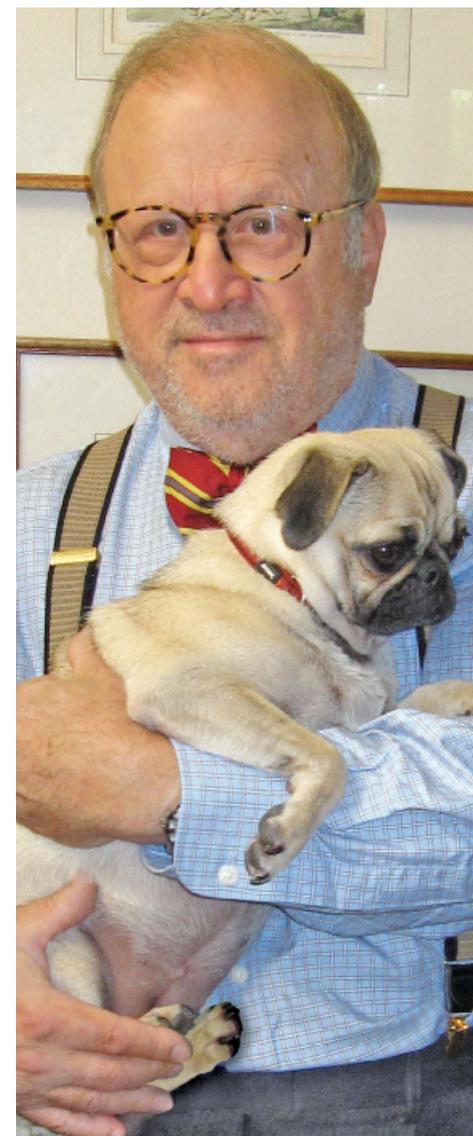
But the fun part of knowing this renowned character was his wit. Famed for his sense of humour, his animated conversations were frequently peppered with esoteric references. He was also widely read. He once told me he put all Shakespeare’s works on his Kindle to re-read (!) while on a cruise with his wife Laurie.

He loved travel. In the true Renaissance spirit, he had varied interests. He was passionate about baseball and missed the Expos. He counselled me on which Volkswagen to buy.

That he was opinionated was part of his charm. It was refreshing in this day of “PC” (politically correct everything and everyone) to debate with someone who took a strong stand – a stand often read by many as his letters to editors were published in newspapers across Canada.

He seemed to revel in mischievous dissonance: today he would have wondered about “woke.” He was sentimental. At his home, I noted he often hugged his beloved dog.

Richard Samuelson was also a thoughtful person. Knowing how much I liked reading the week-end *Wall Street Journal*, he insisted on leaving me his copy – usually with underlined bits – on Sundays.



Richard Samuelson holding Miss Sadie in 2009 for his *Westmount Independent* “Trendsetter” photo (see September 15-16, 2009, p. 10).

Of course, the best parts were, indeed, his emphasized bits, often with an added quirky quip made in his inimitable style.)



Left photo: Nick Bendzar, Right photo: Master Warrant Officer James Quesnel and Warrant Officer (ret.) Dave Smith.

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