

To reserve, renew, manage, check catalogue

## Westmount Public Library's mobile app to launch February 20

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

An app for the Westmount Public Library was scheduled to be launched this week – on Tuesday, February 20 – to provide a range of services on a member's mobile phone.

These include reserving books, searching a "light" version of the catalogue, enabling the renewal of loans and receiving notifications and other information. The app will also hold a member's virtual library card.

Many months in the planning and testing, the app is "the first North American installation of this particular app from our library service vendor," said Lora Baiocco, interim assistant director of the library and community events. She is also the online services librarian.

"We're really looking forward to sharing this tool with the public," added Baiocco,

who has been working on the project with Julie Bouchard, head of systems and technical services.

This included fine-tuning, customizing and testing it.

### Manage the family

The app "will also be a convenient way for families to manage all their library loans such as renewing their kids' books with a few clicks at any time from one phone."

The app is available for Android and Apple (iOS) phones and tablets in app stores by searching for "Westmount Public Library."

"The library staff have been testing the app for a few weeks to make sure they are well versed on how it works and that all is functioning as it should," Baiocco said.

Help is also available at the library's reference desk or by calling 514.989.5355.



Dawna Hobbs, desk clerk at the children's library, with the library's new app.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY.

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Settlement conference planned with Pomerleau, WSP

## Council mandates BMMD legal firm to negotiate over WRC pool


BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council February 5 mandated an outside law firm, BMMD Avocats S.E.N.C.R.L., to participate in a settlement conference with Pomerleau construction and WSP Canada Inc. over repair work due to cracking of the pool's concrete slab at the Westmount recreation centre (WRC).


Pomerleau had been hired to build the

centre, which opened in fall 2013, under a design-build contract. WSP (then called Genivar) was hired as a monitoring firm to provide inspection of the work.

Councillor Mary Gallery, whose commissionership includes sports and recreation, moved the resolution, which also authorized the city's directors of Legal Services and Public Works to represent the city, and pro- continued on p. 10



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# Car blocks Summit Circle resident on way to medical appointment

BY JENNIFER BALL

A prominent Google online review of Westmount's Summit Woods municipal park reads: "nice [woods] – great place to run your dog close to downtown – also parking available."

According to two residents with homes on Summit Circle, which is adjacent to the urban forest, it is parking that has become a bone of contention.

Both residents requested anonymity when asked to recount their recent travails with vehicle owners.

On January 27, a Summit Circle resident found a car had parked across her driveway.

"The driver had left her car in front of my driveway for 25 to 30 minutes and I needed to drive to a medical appointment."

The resident alerted Westmount Public Security. She later provided the *Independent* with the incident number and a photo of the car.

Gregory McBain, the director of Public Security, said, "...in this case here, the vehicle owner received a ticket for \$121 for blocking the driveway."

The resident told the *Independent* that her chief concern in this matter is security. "When cars arrive to enjoy Summit Hill



A car that was ticketed by Public Security for blocking resident's driveway on January 27.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RESIDENT.

Woods [sic] with their dog, they do not always respect the residents' homes."

She said that this time only a medical appointment needed to be delayed, but ambulances have been called regularly to her home, as her mother resides there and suffers from a heart condition that has caused medical emergencies.

"We did not have this problem in the past that an ambulance tried to get to our house and the driveway was blocked, but I imagine the same scenario that happened

on January 27 happening when we really need an emergency exit urgently."

## Small parking lot, strict street-parking rules

Parking for Summit Woods is not as simple as the Google online reviewer seems to suggest. The designated lot can only fit approximately six cars.

Beyond that, drivers need to park on the street and pay close attention to the signage, which indicates the schedule for

parking hours as well as the maximum number of hours permitted.

A second Summit Circle resident said that while some of his neighbours are quick to point out to him the downsides of having some untrained, off-leash dogs and some recalcitrant drivers in their neighbourhood, for him there are also positives.

"Summit Woods is for the common good and we all need to find a way to make it work..."

"I like the fact that there's people out and about. It makes me feel cheerful. During COVID, it was wonderful because you always had people walking around, but the one thing that I'm concerned about is there has been so many incidents of robberies..."

"So, when people come on my property, it makes me nervous."

He told the *Independent* that he has also had vehicle owners park illegally and block his driveway.

He recently installed a sophisticated camera system, and he and his wife were alarmed by what the daily footage revealed: "...my camera system is set up to only notify me and begin to record if somebody crosses the property line and enters my property..."

"...every single day, somebody comes into my driveway and onto my property."

## Man loses balance on Greene, knocks out tooth

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A call was received by Public Security February 10 at 11:56 am for "an elderly man" who fell on Greene Ave, officials said. On arrival, officers found an 80-year-old man bleeding heavily from the mouth. His wife explained he had lost his balance and fallen on his face, losing a tooth.

He was helped up and public safety officers called Urgences Santé for an ambulance. Since the man suffered no other pain, the call was reported to have been

cancelled in the hopes that taking a taxi to the nearby Glen super-hospital to receive stitches might be faster rather than waiting for an ambulance.

No other details were reported.

## PSO helps out-of-gas motorist

A motorist stopped a public safety officer at 6:17 pm February 7 asking for help. She was waiting outside a daycare north of Sherbrooke to pick up children. Public Security officials said the car had run out of gas.

Officers transported her to a gas station

to obtain a container of gas and assisted her in filling up the tank. She was described as a Montreal resident.

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After June 22 to August 9 blue-collar strike

# Council approves 7-year collective agreement 2020 through 2026

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council February 5 unanimously approved a seven-year collective agreement with the city's 124 blue collar workers for the years 2020 through 2026.

Though no details were discussed at the meeting, the new contract was described by city officials in a statement to the *Independent* last week as focussing "primarily on addressing employees' financial concerns in the context of hyperinflation and promoting flexibility to enhance work-life balance."

"Additionally, we have reached consensus on implementing a pilot project for a four-day work week schedule. These represent the key changes."

### Aligning with white-collar

In aligning "closely" with the financial adjustments in the recently approved five-year white-collar collective agreement for 2022-2026, the statement explains, because the blue-collar contract had expired two years earlier, on December 31, 2019, the "elapsed years of 2020 and 2021 are also accounted for with increases of 2.5 percent



The building containing the workers' mess hall, photographed from the city's Corporation Yard at the foot of Bethune on February 15. The mess hall is on the second floor. The third floor was damaged in a fire some years ago and is not part of the eating area.

each."

Those in 2022 and 2023 are 4 percent each followed by 2024 through 2026 of inflation plus 0.75 percent for a minimum of 2.5-percent salary increase and a maximum total of 4 percent.

The city's blue-collar workers belong to the Syndicat des cols bleus regroupés de Montréal (CUPE) – local 301. They went on unlimited strike June 22 and returned to work August 9 (see story August 15, p.1).

### Work scheduling

In announcing the end of the strike at that time, Mayor Christina Smith had said that the city's offer to the workers had granted their requests for "better work scheduling," salary increases and adjustment of several bonuses. She also said that "our salary offers are far superior to those of the past and compare favourably with other cities."

As well, renovation of the workers' mess hall at the Public Works yard remained a priority. Once the collective agreement was signed, the city would have 60 days to pay retroactive amounts to which they are entitled, she said.

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Police Report

Police report locker room thefts and stolen car licence plates

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Among the situations reported in recent weeks by police at Station 12 were a break-in at a St. Catherine St. bagel shop, a string of thefts from lockers at a local discount gym and signs of a new criminal strategy during an ongoing wave of vehicle thefts.

On February 5, according to Station 12 incident reports, the owner of the Fabrique de Bagel's Westmount location received an alarm system notification that an intrusion was under way.

Checking the alarm app's video feed on a smartphone, the owner couldn't see anything out of the ordinary inside the store, said Cst. Mike Yigit, Station 12's community relations officer.

As a result, the owner told the alarm service provider not to bother sending the police. However, by the next day when an employee came in, it was noticed that a back door wasn't closing properly, indicating it might have been damaged during a forced entry.

At that point, the owner decided to scan through the recorded security system

video, which confirmed that an intruder had indeed entered. In spite of this, nothing was stolen, said Cst. Yigit. An investigation of a break-in is under way with images of the suspect as evidence.

Alexis Nihon gym lockers robbed

According to Cst. Yigit, Station 12 has received numerous reports recently of client lockers being broken into and robbed of personal valuables at the Alexis Nihon Plaza branch of a popular chain of fitness gyms.

"A lot of people, when they go to the gym, they leave their stuff in a locker, they go to their workout, and when they come back their lock has been cut and all the contents are gone," he said.

Among the valuables stolen have been Canada Goose winter jackets, wallets containing credit cards and personal identification, as well as expensive jewellery and watches.

Cst. Yigit's number one suggestion to gym users who want to avoid becoming the next victim: leave your ..... most treasured valuables *continued on p. 19*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THANK YOU!

On January 13, around noon, I was struggling down a very icy sidewalk at the top of Rosemount Crescent. A very helpful gentleman (Martin?) who said that he lived nearby stopped his car and gave me a ride to Greene Ave. Many thanks.

ELLEN ALFIN, MONTROSE AVE.

LOOKING FOR UNANIMITY, CONSENSUS CAN LEAD TO PARALYSIS

In a recent letter to the editor (February 6, p. 10), Mr. Peter Trent rebukes the city council for its apparent failure to prioritize the well-being of its constituents by denying a public consultation process.

Mr. Trent's motivations regarding the issues of garbage collection and the banning of wood-burning fireplaces may be questioned. As an admirer of Ambrose Pierce, evidenced in his citation of the author's work, our former mayor might benefit from some introspection and consideration of another of Bierce's insightful observation: "Politics: A strife of interest masquerading as a contest of principles."

Not all proposals by city council necessitate public consultation. Initiatives that demonstrate environmental stewardship require action based on sound evidence, not on the personal preferences of individual citizens.

Excessive reliance on citizen consultation may lead to decision-making paralysis,

particularly in contentious or divisive matters.

Westmount has witnessed this in the past – with many dossiers still pending because of the lack of unanimity. The diversity of opinions within any community means that reaching consensus on certain issues can be a challenging task, if not outright impossible. In such instances, deferring to expert judgment, scientific research or established best practices may be a more prudent course of action to ensure that our council's initiatives are made in the public interest.

I acknowledge the importance of public participation. In fact, involving citizens in decision-making processes fosters transparency, inclusivity and accountability with local government.

But I believe we need to strike a balance between community engagement and the need for timely and decisive action, particularly in matters concerning the common good and environmental leadership.

I look forward to more environmental and socially responsible initiatives from our city council, and encourage Westmount citizens to applaud and support such measures.

RICHARD DUFOUR, ANWOTH RD.

PEOPLE WITH TRENT RE: CONSULTATION

Wow! Even former mayor Trent is not happy with the consultation skills of the current city council (February 6, p. 10),

which is led by his hand-picked successor. Thank you for speaking out, citizen Trent, and joining so many other residents with similar views.

JIM RICHARDS, DORCHESTER BLVD.

BRING BACK FIREPLACES, WEEKLY GARBAGE PICK-UP, QUALITY SNOW REMOVAL

So gratified the consultative process is still alive and well in Westmount, although it seems the garbage pick-up change eluded the elected powers-that-be.

Regarding the garbage debacle and the fireplace log burning banning – perhaps we should be protesting to keep weekly garbage pick-ups and require the pick-ups are done only with electric trucks. Perhaps that could save the fireplaces. A good fire is like having your home give you a hug. Something else to miss along with the famous Westmount snow removal method – once the envy of all municipalities. At least we get consulted on tree planting in Murray Hill Park.

I am not as optimistic as our former most excellent mayor, but it is nice to hope.

IVAN SPECTOR, ARLINGTON AVE.

WE NEED COMMUNITY COMPOST BINS

How on earth am I supposed to help to city reduce food waste when there are no viable options for residents of large apartment buildings to compost?

While the city has mandated that apartment buildings with nine to 29 units must participate in its food-waste collection system as of May 1, buildings with 30 or more units are completely left out of the new policies.

The city claims that "Food waste collection is available to all in Westmount who wish to participate," however, this is only true if a building manager is involved to coordinate the building's food waste collection with the city.

Having to jump through bureaucratic hoops creates a needlessly complicated barrier to starting composting (assuming building managers would even want to help).

What I propose is a much simpler solution: to install community compost bins in central areas of the city like Westmount Park. Neighbourhoods such as CDN-NDG and Le Plateau-Mont Royal have already successfully taken such initiatives, so why not Westmount? The bins would be easy to implement and immediately enable all Westmount residents to immediately begin reducing their food waste.

DYLAN LAWLESS, DE MAISONNEUVE BLVD.

NEXT SOUTHEAST REPORT SHOULD REFLECT NEIGHBOURS' WISHES

With reference to your article of January 23 ("Design contract awarded for revitalizing city's southeast sector," p. 1), announcing a design contract awarded to LeMay Co. Inc. for revitalizing the city's southeast sector, only one prior report was mentioned.

In fact, there have been at least three commissioned by the city. These proposals included the radical narrowing of Dorchester, eliminating the Dorchester curve at St. Catherines St. and erecting six-storey buildings on the Tupper parking lots.

The southeast sector has the highest density of any sector in Westmount and, at its border with the city of Montreal, there is an already densely populated zone, which is growing, with repercussions for traffic congestion and use of our services.

The southeast sector is also the least served in the city with public green spaces.

Dissatisfied with the city's proposals, a number of southeast residents organized surveys and public consultations that led to commissioning a report by McGill University's School of Urban Planning.

We received it in March 2021. It was widely disseminated to the residents, the council, the administration and the press. This set of proposals provided three possible pathways for development, each of which balanced a mix of low-rise housing and green spaces, along with sensible approaches to pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular transportation.

We expect that this, yet again, new study by LeMay Co. will take into account the desires of the residents as reflected in the design options proposed by the McGill report and we expect that the southeast residents will be involved in determining the proposals reached.

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*Wightman, Sutherland, Bloom, Cram thanked for work*

# New blood joins Centre Greene board – Community centre's operations, revenue getting back to normal post-COVID

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Significant changes on the governing board as well as on the staff at Centre Greene were announced during the community and recreation centre's annual general meeting on February 8.

Jane Wightman, who has served as president of the Centre Greene board for around a decade, is stepping down. Michele Beacom, a longtime Centre Greene board member, was chosen by fellow board members to take over as president.

In addition to these developments, two members of the Centre Greene board are also stepping away after many years of service.

Kate Sutherland, who has served as vice-president in recent years as well as on the board more than 20 years, is departing. And Erica Bloom, who has long led Centre Greene's annual Treats & Treasures fundraiser, has decided to pass the torch.

## *Cram leaves for welding program*

Finally, Sophie Cram, who served on the Centre Greene staff for 20 years (most recently as building operations manager), is moving on to pursue studies towards becoming a certified welder and tinsmith.

"We are watching and cheering from the sidelines," said Wightman, noting that Cram has taken on the challenge of doing her studies in French.

Paying homage to the two departing board members, Wightman noted that Bloom at various points had been involved in organizing activities involving tai chi, ballet and garage sales.

"She's given so much of her time and passion to Centre Greene," said Wightman, adding that the legacy she leaves



Outgoing Centre Greene board member Erica Bloom (right) was presented with a gift for her years of service from president Jane Wightman (left) and executive-director Heather Hodges. Another retiring board member, Kate Sutherland (not seen in photo), was also presented with a gift.

behind "is absolutely endless."

According to Wightman, Sutherland provided key assistance during the COVID pandemic. "Her rational and calm nature have truly been exceptional," she said. "Remember, you may be off the board, but you are a lifer, my friend Kate."

## *Costa, Owen join board*

Joining the board to fill the vacant seats are Harethuza Costa, a multilingual Caisse Desjardins branch manager, and Suzanne Owen, a lawyer currently serving as a legal counsel at McGill University.

Executive-director Heather Hodges said in her report that September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023 was Centre Greene's first full year of operation since being forced to close in March 2020 because of the pandemic.

"While we anticipated challenges upon resuming full operations, nothing could have prepared us for the immense need we encountered within our community after such a prolonged period of isolation for many," she said.

According to board treasurer Gerard Fellerath, Centre Greene's various streams

of revenue have been getting back up to normal levels again following the COVID slump.

"I'm pleased to report that the finances are strong and with the generous support of all of our benefactors and donors, we can look forward to another healthy year financially," he said.

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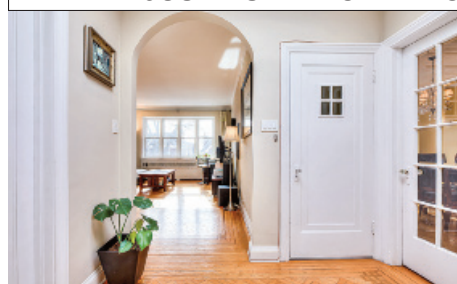
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Isaac Urman: hockey player-of-the-month for January

# First-time goalie gives his ‘all’ & his best with a smile

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

The Westmount Minor Hockey Association (WMHA) has selected Isaac Urman, 11, as the January 2024 player-of-the-month. The goaltender for the M11B Westmount Wings hockey team has played with Westmount since 2019 starting in the pre-novice MAHG-1 program for 6-year-olds.

Isaac, 11, is the second goalie so far this season to have been chosen as the player-of-the-month in the city’s recognition program launched in 2019. It was described at inception as aimed not only to highlight the contributions of players, but also to acknowledge the opportunities and skills that minor hockey, and sports as a whole, can offer young people (see November 2019, p. 1).

“Isaac is a first-time goalie,” explained Gabrielle Jay-Riendeau, vice-president of social media and communications for the WMHA and sports coordinator for the Westmount recreation centre (WRC).

“It takes bravery to gear up, stay in the net, and invite players to shoot pucks at you of your own volition,” she said in submitting the reasons for his selection. “It can be nerve-wracking and certainly not



easy, but Isaac is giving it his all and doing his best with a smile.”

His four coaches – Ilya Semionov, Leo Semionov, Johnny Rees, and Nathan Semionov – agree, Jay-Riendeau explained. “Isaac has always shown up and consistently put in an outstanding effort. He is always smiling in practice and is eager to learn and improve.”

**Stood strong**

They also point out, she continued, “that though it had been a difficult season for the whole team, Isaac stood strong in net, no matter the score and the heavy workload, and kept a great attitude. Every game, his perseverance and determination catch our eye. The biggest asset a team can have is a player who always puts in the effort.”

In choosing a player of the month, the WMHA selects players based on their commitment, perseverance, positive attitude and leadership, she explained.

“Bearing this in mind, his coaches contend that “Isaac has very much earned the honour of being named player of the month.”

The association, she added, “could not agree more!”



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Batshaw Adoption Column

# Siblings Mandy & Johnny need a home

Mandy is a toddler who is energetic, has a good disposition and smiles a lot. She continues to meet her developmental milestones and enjoys exploring her environment.

Mandy, although healthy, was born with a heart condition (minor medical issue). She is stable and doing well, but requires a yearly follow-up with a cardiologist.

Mandy's speech is developing well and

she is learning new words every day. Mandy is a loving child and enjoys bedtime stories, which help put her to sleep at night.

Her brother Johnny is a school-age child and attends elementary school, where he is doing well. Johnny is a sociable child who enjoys playing with his toys and making new friends. Johnny at times can be rambunctious but with structure and consistency, he does well.

.....  
**WRC pool, cont'd from p. 1**

pose options and counter offers.

"A settlement conference is seen as a good alternative to costly and lengthy litigation," Councillor Antonio D'Amico, finance commissioner, told the *Independent*. "I am looking forward to a fair and just resolution of this conflict."

After the centre opened some 10 years ago, it was discovered, the resolution stated, that the concrete slab failed to comply with contractual obligations and good standards and practices.

The cracking was described as endangering the useful life of the pool. Remedial work had been undertaken, but more cracks had appeared (see story "City negotiating, but ready to sue over pool slab," Sep-

tember 11, 2018, p. 1).

**Repair work**

The repair efforts had taken more than two months to correct some 610 square meters of the pool's concrete base, 130 square meters of the pool's walls, installation of one new concrete joint and re-painting 980 square meters of the pool's surfaces (see story and photo November 10, 2020, p. 10).

At the meeting of city council, October 5, 2020, an additional cost of \$59,244 had been approved for the repairs to the slab and walls, bringing the total to a maximum of \$552,685, taxes included. This was reported to be required to provide a larger

Johnny needs extra attention to help improve his speech and language as he does well when caregivers are able to speak slowly, and repeat the directives and provide him with the opportunity to repeat sentences.

Both children enjoy outdoor activities and play well together.

Potential foster parents should be able to provide a structured and predictable routine for the children as they thrive well in that type of environment.

Potential foster parents should be open to caring long term for this sibling group

and provide a permanent and loving environment that can take the time necessary to encourage and work towards improving Johnny's speech as well as be available to meet any medical needs and appointments that Mandy may require.

The ideal family would be that of a Latino or native community that would be open to caring for this sibling group on a long-term basis.

Interested persons should contact Batshaw Youth and Family Centres at: 514.932.7161 ext. 1139 and ask about Mandy and Johnny.



The WRC's pool on February 19.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

contingency when it was found there might be "a few more micro-cracks" to repair.

The original defects had been investigated and discussed publicly since 2018 when the council agreed to take legal steps

if necessary against the contractor and monitoring firm when it was determined the original concrete had not been poured thickly enough on top of the metal rebar reinforcement (see story September 11, 2018, p. 1).



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# Grey takes on nationalism at Atwater Library

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Although Montreal human rights lawyer Julius Grey grew up in Poland and continues to love its poetry, music and literature, there's at least one thing he never could stand about the country.

"I hated the Catholic nationalism – narrow Catholic nationalism that occasionally came out of people. That bothered me," Grey acknowledged during a talk he gave at the Atwater Library on February 1 on some of his most recent efforts to challenge Quebec's Bill 96.

For more than four decades, Julius Grey has been known for his advocacy of English-language rights in Quebec, successfully contesting certain elements of Bill 101, which restricted English on commercial signage.

However, while Grey said he loves Quebec, he dislikes the "petty nationalism" he encountered here, although he said he agreed Bill 101's education system restrictions were justified.

"Quebec was in fact in some danger in the 1970s," he said, noting that during certain historical periods, Montreal was mostly English-speaking, but that plunging birth rates among French-speaking

Quebecers after the Quiet Revolution threatened to reduce them to a minority in Montreal.

"I think, looking at it objectively, Quebec was right in restricting access in some ways to English schools," he said.

However, regarding the current Quebec government's efforts to further protect French through new legislation that includes Bill 96, "There is absolutely no reason to deny people medical services, government services, to divide the English into two groups," said Grey, alluding to the government's definition of "historic" anglophones and those who arrived afterwards.

He said he wanted to stress that his views don't constitute "an anti-Quebec position," that "nationalism is the same everywhere all over the world," where "each side only sees its point of view ...

"So, it's not anti-Quebec. It's anti-nationalism. And the present battle against Bill 96, and the present wave of language legislation, is based on an absolute myth. The myth is that French was endangered."

In a piece that Grey wrote for a collection of essays (*Le français en déclin? Repenser la francophonie québécoise*) published in November last year, he argued that French isn't endangered in Quebec.



Human rights lawyer Julius Grey, seen here at the Atwater Library on February 1, dislikes nationalism.

"There is not a single case anywhere in the world where a language has disappeared where there was a free and obligatory education system in that language," he maintained during his presentation.

"In Quebec, we have a free and obligatory – obligatory because of Bill 101, only a few people are exempted from it – free and obligatory system in French. There is no way French can disappear."

He said what Quebec nationalists really want – although "they deny it, what the ultranationalists want is for the immigrants to study only French."

"They are not happy with somebody who goes to French school and so on and comes back out perfectly bilingual," Grey added. "And they say so openly when they want to discourage English CEGEPs or English universities."

But as he pointed out, the irony is that many Quebec nationalists see to it that their own children learn to speak French and English.

"In my wife's family, there is nationalism," he said.

"And one particular person is very actively nationalist. And her daughter speaks perfect English. You couldn't tell that she's not an anglophone."

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# Dramatis Personae puts on five plays at Vic Hall

By JENNIFER BALL

Westmount's community-theatre company, Dramatis Personae, was at work from February 5 to 12 at Victoria Hall with four performances of *Ghost Light*.

The large cast of 10 actors performed five short humorous plays: *Ode to Ghost Lights* by Chistopher Moore, *Standing Room Only* by Aren Haun, *Time Flies* by David Ives, *Mercury's in Retrograde* by Rich Orloff, *Storms, Sheets and Show Tunes* by Stacey Lane and the *Fifteen-Minute Hamlet* by Tom Stoppard.



Dramatis Personae's cast at Victoria Hall on February 11: from left, Nathalie Saint-Pierre, Malcolm McRae, Jenny Chopra, Karen Sauder, Ellen Rubin, Brian Wrench, Mary Ann Farley, Ann Elbourne, Bruna Perusello, Clive Brewer and Chistopher Moore.

In *Ode to Ghost Lights*, actor Mary Ann Farley takes us backstage, where the “ghost light,” that solitary beacon, illuminates more than just the stage – it reveals the hidden stories of those who tread the boards after hours.

*Standing Room Only* introduces us to wannabe theatre punters – played by Jenny Chopra, Bruna Perusello, Ellen Rubin, Ann Elbourne, Malcolm McRae and Brian Wench – who engage with a theatre usher who can neither explain the narrative arc of the play, nor its length or even the cost to watch it.

In *Time Flies*, Ives dispatches us to a lily pod where mayflies must contend with the reality that they only live once and for just 24 hours. Horace (Brian Wench) and May (Nathalie Saint-Pierre) navigate their brief existence and endure indignities from world-renowned nature conservationist David Attenborough (Clive Brewer).

*Mercury's in Retrograde* is set in the Oval Office, where extraterrestrial emissaries (played by Ellen Rubin and Ann Elbourne) demand a timeshare on Earth.

Lane's play *Storms, Sheets, and Show Tunes* introduces us to ghosts (played by Bruna Perussello, Jenny Chopra and Malcolm McRae) hoping to permanently haunt an old theatre.

In the *Fifteen-Minute Hamlet*, Stoppard distills the Bard's tragedy into a mere quarter-hour. Eleven actors dramatize the “Danish play” at breakneck speed. A frolic for both Shakespeare aficionados and dill-ettantes.

The play's director is Chistopher Moore. Moore said that one of the biggest challenges facing theatre companies is declining attendance but for the matinee on February 11, the seats were full and the audience laughed in all the right places. On the other hand, there was only one 13-year-old boy, one man in his thirties and the rest were predominantly retirees.

So how does theatre remain relevant in a digital, on-demand, instant gratification world?

Moore replied this way: “Those who do choose to go see theatre absolutely benefit from that almost tangible sense of inclusion and that sense of play and imagination.

“The feelings are often more visceral because you're right there in front of the actors performing the piece. You're not disconnected by a screen. You're seeing it all happen in real time, right in front of you, and I think that that's the reason theatre will never die. There is no substitute for it.”



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# Shelter's budget on initial \$600k real estate investment swells to \$14.7M

## When is Resilience Montreal day shelter moving?

By JENNIFER BALL

How much money is enough for Resilience Montreal to open its new premises and when does it need to leave its current location? These were among the questions the *Independent* wanted to put to David Chapman, who is the executive director of the non-profit day shelter, currently located on the southwest corner of Atwater and St. Catherine St., whose lot is in both West-



4000 St. Catherine St. on February 19.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

mount and Montreal's Ville Marie (downtown) borough.

A new, permanent address is planned for 780 Atwater (the former site of Rowntree Antiques, about a half block into St. Henri). Renovations were scheduled to have started in September 2023, but they didn't.

Chapman spoke to only a handful of journalists, which excluded the *Independent*, at the end of last year and indicated that Resilience Montreal needs an additional \$6 million to complete the project due to higher-than-expected bids, and that it "cannot remain forever" in its current location at 4000 St. Catherine St., the former site of the Miso restaurant and, many years ago, a McDonald's.

That site recently changed hands. The Quebec land registry database lists the purchase price of 4000 St. Catherine St. as \$6,500,000 on February 24, 2022.

Commercial leases can be registered, but there is no commercial lease registered between the owners of 4000 St. Catherine St. – Atwater Real Estate Investments L.P. –

and Resilience Montreal, on the province of Quebec's registre foncier website, although a lease registered to the address' Montreal lot between a prior landlord (Shanri Investment Ltd) and prior tenant (9142-5900 Québec Inc) could have been renewed twice to expire on May 31 of this year.

It could well be that the lease is on a month-to-month basis, but neither Chapman, nor Westmounter Sohrab Alavi, who is the president of Atwater Real Estate Investments L.P., responded to requests for interviews. Chapman was emailed the week of January 8 and then again on February 5, and Alavi was mailed a letter at his company's office the week of February 5.

Interestingly, two of the partners of Atwater Real Estate Investments L.P. – Laframboise Holding Inc. and 9457-8853 Québec Inc. – are connected to Guy Laframboise, a Westmounter who attempted at one time to re-develop the commercial building at Prince Albert Ave. and de Maisonneuve (see May 31, 2016, p. 1 and August 9, 2016, p. 1).

A different residential project by a dif-

ferent developer is currently under construction there.

Resilience Montreal's project funding is provided by the two senior levels of government – provincial and federal – and by foundation money.

It is in the public domain that it has already received \$7.2 million in promised government funding for the new site, plus it has \$1.5 million in promised money from the Fondation du Grand Montréal. The \$6 million that Chapman indicated that it needs to raise would round up the chest to close to \$15 million to renovate the former shop.

The 780 Atwater building, according to the Quebec land registry database, was sold to Resilience for \$600,000 by Rowntree Antiques Inc. in 2021.

### What Westmount, Montreal say

It is not known to the *Independent* what the immediate plans are or what the timeline is for the owner of 4000 St. Catherine St., but on January 9, Frédéric Neault, director of the Urban Planning department for the city of Westmount, provided some background information. A provided statement explained that the location is in a special planning area and no permits can currently be issued:

"This property is in the area covered by the Special Planning Program (SPP) for the South-East sector. Thus, until this detailed planning document is adopted, no 'major' permits will be issued. These 'major' permits are as follows: Construction of new buildings; building extensions; demolition; alterations for the purpose of converting the use of a building; cadastral operations and lot subdivisions."

(See also "City extends freeze on south-east development," October 31, 2023, p. 1).

The city of Montreal was also contacted and on January 11, Hugo Bourgoin, media relations officer at the city of Montreal, said "the Borough of Ville-Marie has not, to date, issued any permit requests for the address to which you refer and confirms that no permit requests are under consideration for this same address..."

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Chandler is a caramel-shaded daddy Chihuahua and Joey is a black-and-tan shaded son Chihuahua. Chandler is four years old and Joey is two years old, from the same breeder.

They are presently in foster care for the Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions volunteer rescue group and having a great time in the home environment, while keeping everyone entertained. Their foster family is reporting a dynamic duo of playful, active, affectionate little five-pound bundles of joy.

They are social with all, including dogs of all sizes that they meet on their outings. They do well in a house, as they check out the squirrels through the windows. They hear everything with their extra-fine "bat ears" and then alert everyone. They are hilarious as they play together and chase each other around merrily. Chandler and Joey enjoy car rides and outings and are definitely very social guys.

They are both healthy, up to date with their inoculations, neutered and microchipped.

Being tiny, it would be best to be in a family with children over eight years of age. They also are pee-pad trained, which



is great on days when the snow is taller than they are.

If you would like more information on them, please do not hesitate to contact Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions at their email [info@gerdysrescue.org](mailto:info@gerdysrescue.org), refer to their website at [www.gerdysrescue.org](http://www.gerdysrescue.org), or follow them on their Facebook presence.

Please do not hesitate, Chandler and Joey are loving sweeties. They would bring your family great joy.

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Please refer to the Montreal SPCA website at [www.sPCA.com](http://www.sPCA.com), scroll to Sybellya's information page from his identification number, 51399438, and then take note of the visiting hours at the shelter.

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His second recommendation: steer clear of locks typically sold in "dollar stores," which are usually of very low quality and are easy to pick open or break.

As well, he suggests choosing a locker in a high-traffic area, such as near a doorway, where a break-in is much more likely to be noticed.

#### F-150 pick-up stolen

After months of reports of multiple car thefts from Westmount's streets, Station 12 incident records indicate there was just one vehicle stolen in recent weeks: a Ford F-150 light-duty truck, which was reported missing on February 13.

According to the incident summary, the owner parked overnight outside his home on Lansdowne Ave. beginning at 9 pm on February 12. It was gone when he looked again the following day. There weren't any signs, such as broken window glass on the ground, to indicate the vehicle had been forcibly entered.

#### New trend? – Licence plates stolen

Although local stolen car incidents appear to be down for the time being at least,

#### Police report, cont'd from p. 5

a related trend may be emerging: the theft of vehicle licence plates.

On February 9, the owner of a Mazda parked on Tupper St. in eastern Westmount filed a report with police at Station 12, complaining that the car's licence plate was missing and possibly stolen.

Then on February 10, the owner of a Land Rover parked on Edgehill Rd. in upper Westmount reported that his vehicle's plate also was missing.

Cst. Yigit acknowledged that the theft of

license plates off of vehicles similar to stolen ones has become an increasingly common tactic among car thieves seeking (at least temporarily) to conceal their traces.

He also pointed out that since most car owners probably don't check often whether their license plate is still in place, it's more likely a plate theft could go unnoticed for some time.

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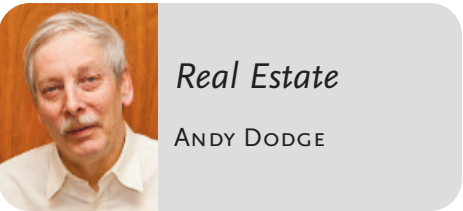


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Real Estate  
ANDY DODGE

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 January 2024. 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.

The year 2024 got off to a slow start, with only four Westmount sales logged by local agents and only one of those selling above the municipal valuation.

This is the tale of a market that dropped badly when the pandemic first struck in 2020, then climbed with the rest of the market by offering extra bedrooms and home offices for a changing population.

That “bubble” receded by mid-2022, then struggled back last spring, but dropped off as mortgage interest rates successfully tempered the real estate market.

Among the four home sales, the prices ranged from \$1.7 to \$4.2 million, the latter offering a mark-up over the city tax value of only 1.3 percent. The others all went below valuation by as much as 15.4 percent; making this the fourth consecutive month that the ratio has been negative. Though there may be a slight upward stagger in the January figure, low volume often distorts the figures around the holiday season. What remains to be seen is whether the new year brings a strong increase in prices, as has happened in earlier years, or whether the slide that started last August will continue.

Agents are bringing new product onto the market in a hurry – there were 89 listings for Westmount houses as of mid-February, an increase of 15, or 20 percent, in a month. While still none is asking less than \$1,000,000, there were more listings

# January sales: Not much of a start

Average adjusted price for ‘typical’ Westmount house, by month, January 2019 to January 2024, based on accepted offer dates



in each million-dollar tranche of the market, and even three more house rentals than were being offered a month prior.

mount Square, 4175 St. Catherine St., which brought an offer of \$4,600,000, the other in a smaller St. Catherine St. building, for \$590,500. The huge discrepancy between the two makes it impossible to compare; they will be drawn into the first-quarter’s statistical time period once the February and March sales are added.

The only January sales in adjacent Westmount came in the Côte des Neiges area north of the city limits. Two houses there sold for prices of \$820,000 and \$1,930,000, and a duplex-type condominium sold for \$687,000. We keep watching the sales on Roslyn Ave. between the city limits and Queen Mary Rd.: after nine sales were posted during 2023, three more houses were listed at the time of writing.

## Condos in Wst Square sustain water damage

By JENNIFER BALL

The *Independent* was notified by a resident that there has been significant water damage to some condos in Tower 3 of Westmount Square.

Tower 3 is near the eastern edge of the complex, facing Greene Ave. The homeowner, who wished to remain anonymous, believed that water stemmed from a condo above and that it went on to cause significant water damage to several condos as well as furniture and valuables contained within.

The water became evident in the small hours of February 9 and repair work is currently being assessed by individual condo owners’ insurance companies, the condo association and Westmount Square Residential, through which the condo owners own the two residential towers.

Simon Dorais, manager, resident services at Westmount Square Residential, was contacted on February 14 and 15 to verify information about the event, but he did not return phone calls seeking comment.

### Condos

Only two condominiums sold in January, one a penthouse at Château West-

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## Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

# Hendriks' brings gummy bears to Galerie 203



Artist Bob Hendriks and Toni Gelfusa.



Marie Barbancourt and Carl Dana.

Last time that I visited Galerie 203, I was greeted by a big black bear. The striking photo already bore a “Sold” red dot: someone else loved it too. At the time, gallery owner **Corinne Asseraf** introduced me to artist/photographer **Ilana Block**, whose wise owl, frolicking fox kits and steely-eyed apex lion are but a few of her special subjects. When she’s not photographing in the wild, Block, a trained naturopath, works at Westmount’s Harmony Health Centre.

But I digress.

Last week’s red-carpet vernissage was for artist/graphic designer **Bob Hendriks**, who has his own take on bears. His work premiered in Westmount at the Greene Ave. space famed for Corinne’s curatorial eye – not to mention epic events.

The protagonist of Hendriks’ art is colour. It vibrantly drips, wiggles and smears, often with matching “gummy bears.”

The little animals are matched with a painting, **Jennifer Roman** – the artist’s life partner – explained. Their names alone are fun. My eye was caught by Bagel (“part of the Sprinkle series”) and Tuxedo Black.

The exhibit also showed his work featuring celebs such as Grace Kelly and Prince. Attending a Galerie 203 launch reminds me of Art Basel Miami Beach, the annual art-and-party extravaganza in Florida.

Corinne’s opening *continued on p. 22*

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**Social notes, cont'd from p. 21**

events are Art Basel-style high voltage. Obviously, the food is fabulous as it's catered by Corinne herself, but the guests-plus-art mix creates an inimitable spark.

Those arriving in the unseasonal down-pour included fashion folk, executives, neighbours, designers and, of course, art aficionados.

Overheard conversations ranged from AI discussions and the new exhibit at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, to ski conditions at Tremblant and catwalk couture.

Noted were **Joseph Montanaro**, **Charles Robinson**, **Rochelle Cantor** (who owns the building housing Galerie 203), **Mimi Surada** (who showed me her latest – and greatest! – Samsung phone, which I covet), **Brenda Lamb** and **Claude Lande**, **Toni Gelfusa**, **Julie Drolet** and **Louis Chasles**, **Celia Lavinkas** and **Andrew Mann**, **Marie Barbancourt** and **Carl Dana**, and neighbour **Rob Callard**, co-owner of Nick's Restaurant.



Julie Drolet, Jennifer Roman and Louis Chasles.



Joseph Montanaro and Charles Robinson.



Mimi Surada and Rochelle Cantor.



Brenda Lamb and Claude Lande.



Corinne Asseraf and Ilana Block.



Rob Callard and Corinne Asseraf.



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