

## Extending, re-configuring seating areas

# City set to re-jig outdoor life on Greene, Sherbrooke

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

With the onset of climbing temperatures, the city is preparing to extend and enhance last year's seating and pedestrian areas on Greene Ave. and to re-configure the placing of parklets on Sherbrooke in Victoria village.

The plan was announced at the virtual council meeting April 6 by Councillor Cynthia Lulham and is moving ahead quickly. It is expected to take place starting at the end of this week.

In providing additional details to the *Independent*, Lulham said that in Victoria village, where the parklets were set up last summer on both sides of Sherbrooke, the plan is to position them on the south side of the street on either side of Prince Albert square. This will help expand the size of

the square, which last year was full of people, she explained.

It is also proposed to install another parklet on Victoria outside the Metro grocery store, which now has prepared food that people will be able to eat outside. Café terrasses are already planned by restaurants/food outlets on the west side of the Victoria.

### Greene area to expand south

On Greene, where the street was narrowed last summer to one driving lane between Sherbrooke and de Maisonneuve, it is now proposed to extend this configuration south to St. Catherine so that portion of the sidewalk can also be widened and outfitted with street furniture.

More picnic tables are ..... on order, including those *continued on p. 4*

## Bixi season begins



The Bixi stand on Victoria south of de Maisonneuve was being assembled the afternoon of April 7. See p. 20 for photos of other Bixi stations in Westmount.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

## Following its own heritage guidelines

# Work planned to restore some 300 city hall windows

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Painstaking work starting this summer to restore city hall's original wood-framed leaded and unlead windows is expected to span two years, according to interim assistant director general Bruce St. Louis. It is estimated to cost some \$1.3 million.

The city will be following its own window guidelines for such Category 1 heri-

tage-rated buildings, for which a permit was approved by council April 6.

Each one of the exterior leaded-paned windows that swing outward will be restored individually along with the interior windows that swing inward and also latch when closed, for an actual count of at least 300 windows, St. Louis explained. The frames will be repaired ..... and "bits and pieces of" *continued on p. 9*

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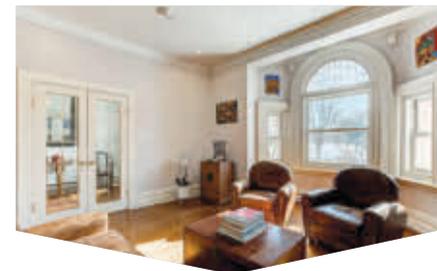
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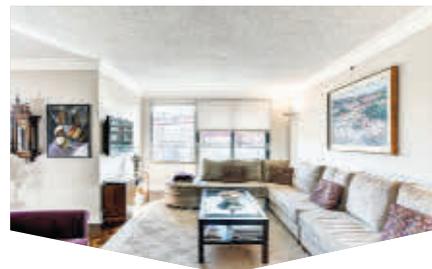
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## Existing employee Cérat named to head new structure City appoints new HR director as Dragon retires

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The role being played by the city's Human Resources department during the COVID pandemic was cited by city council April 6 when the retirement of the director, Jocelyne Dragon, was announced along with the appointment of Annie-Claude Cérat to the position.

HR has been an essential service to the city during the year-long health emergency presented by the pandemic when it was important to the city to retain and maintain its work force when so many have been working remotely.

"Human Resources is not a department that citizens interact with, but it played a key and critical service," Mayor Christina Smith said as she and Councillor Jeff Shamie thanked Dragon for "her exceptional service." Shamie's commissionership includes the city's "administration" portfolio.

Dragon, who retired April 1, had initially been appointed director in 2013 by then councillor Smith in her capacity at that time as commissioner of administration. It was also on the recommendation of the



Jocelyne Dragon was welcomed to Westmount at the November 18, 2013 council meeting as the city's new human resources director.

city's then director general Duncan Campbell, who retired in 2018 (see story November 26, 2013, p. 9).

Fast forward, Campbell has recently returned to the same position in an interim capacity as Dragon retires.

Along with Cérat's appointment as HR director, Roslane Mediouni was named assistant director, and Richard Pires as HR advisor. All three have been working together in the department in other positions.

Cérat, who joined the city in 2003 in HR, will head a new structure that includes the position of "advisor," which had been created especially for COVID and changing workplace safety, according to interim director general Duncan Campbell. As well, the city is working "to get our workers considered as essential" and able to get vaccinated, he said. "So far, only the public safety officers are considered as such."

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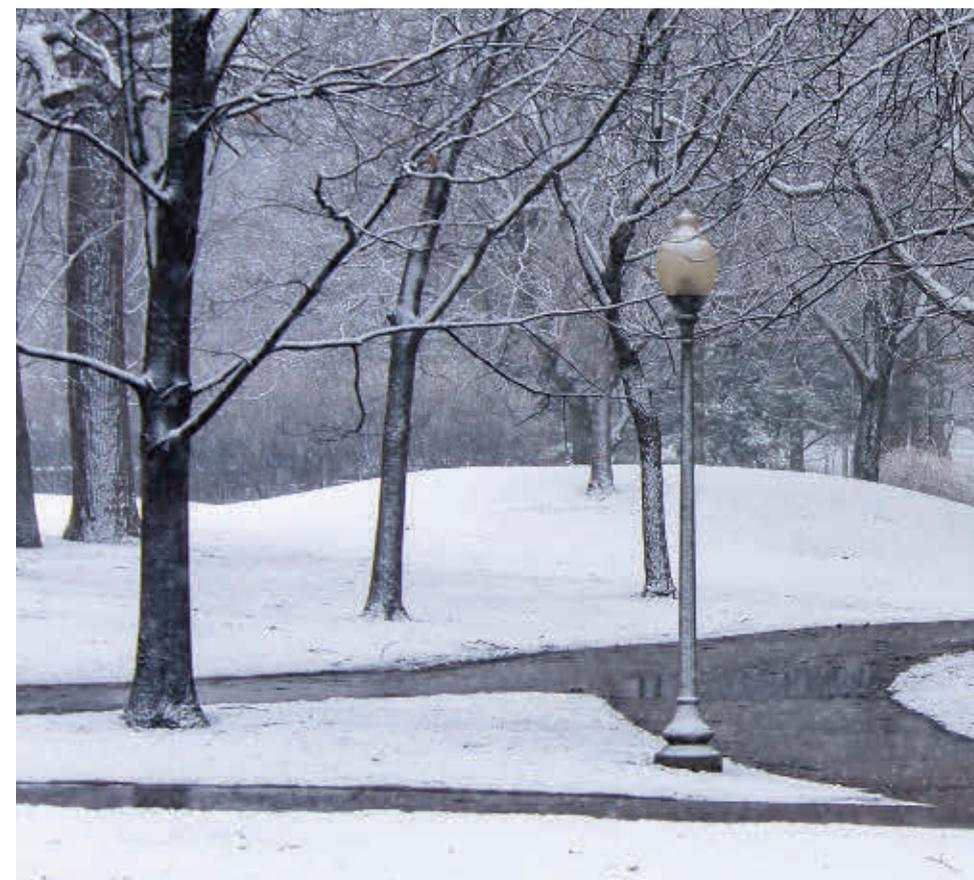
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## What a difference a week makes



Westmount Park on April 1, main photo, and April 8, inset.

PHOTOS: RALPH THOMPSON.

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### Re-configuring, cont'd. from p. 1

that are accessible to wheelchairs. Street painting and *faux* grass will also be extended to St. Catherine.

The initial set-up and investment in the projects for both commercial districts were

undertaken to provide a way for residents and shoppers to get outside during COVID and to encourage revitalization of the commercial areas.



This summer will be the first full summer of the parklets. With construction still ongoing of this brand new one on the north side of Sherbrooke St. at Prince Albert on August 20 of last year, users were already testing out the benches.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.



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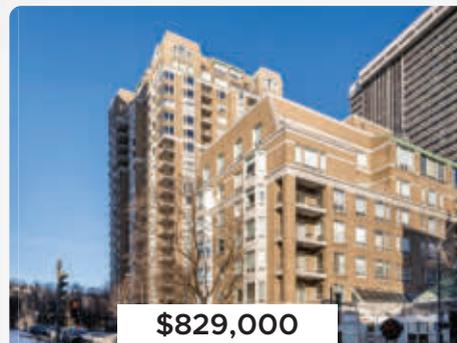
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## JANE ATKINSON, RIP

Sad it is to learn of Jane Atkinson's passing away.

It was so much fun having her on board the Summit Woods Advisory Committee, its inception dating to 2010 when Summit Park was renamed as Summit Woods, to better reflect its unique status as a pocket wilderness, with its biodiversity offering its visitors a panoply of plants, flowering shrubs and a host of tiny denizens thriving on the ground cover.

One of the committee's first tasks was to assist the city to formulate a do-s and don't-s guide to visitors at Summit. These rules were posted at each of the sanctuary's entrances. A nature board followed, and in 2014, Jane provided a singular contribution to the appreciation of the forest – her comprehensive plant survey.

On her own initiative, over a two-year period from spring to fall, she combed through the hummocky terrain and catalogued the plants and flowering shrubs, identifying the locations of over 90 species of botanical specimens. Her study will serve for future reference, as regrettably, many wild flower species are presently disappearing.

It was such a delight to have Jane on our many outings to Summit Woods. She found what I think was the last wild orchid there. Hers was a wealth of knowledge willingly shared, and her enthusiasm for

nature at Summit Woods never dimmed.

Thanks for so much, Jane.

JOHN FRETZ, LANSDOWNE AVE.

## PRESERVE RESIDENTS' FREEDOM TO BURN FIREWOOD

*Open letter to Mayor Christina Smith and Councillor Marina Brzeski, commissioner of sustainability and accessibility*

I am writing in response to a column in the March 30 *Independent* by Penny Westman of the Westmount Healthy City Project entitled "Why are we still burning wood in Westmount?" (p. 20). In it, she asked readers to write to you in support of a by-law to ban the use of wood burning appliances in Westmount.

I am writing to express my wholehearted agreement with the approach by council with regards to wood burning. While I do not disagree with the author's premise of the potential health risks of burning wood, it is clear that there are no homes in Westmount that are heated primarily with wood-burning fires. Even the occasional fire seems to be quite rare. I am not aware of anyone who regularly uses their fireplace to burn wood in Westmount, and it is quite difficult to find anyone who even occasionally burns wood in their fireplace.

I appreciate the practical approach by council, which recognizes the realities of today's Westmounters who do not rely on



Jane Atkinson, second from right, at the Contactivity Centre's St. Patrick's Day celebration March 14, 2013 with, from right, Hugh Darwood, Angela Lanno (hugging Lansdowne Bear) and Diane Deschamps.

PHOTO: MARTIN C. BARRY

wood to heat their homes. At the same time, council has permitted residents the freedom to enjoy an occasional fire, which in my view is an appropriate balance of health, environmental and personal considerations.

The author's concern about the health effects of second-hand smoke are commendable, but I would suggest that greater gains in the general health of Westmounters would be better achieved through other measures, such as a large indoor pool (for use during our long winters – the YMCA pool is well beyond capacity), increased availability of refrigerated rinks (the rented rink at Westmount Park was lovely this winter) and continued expansion of dedicated bike lanes (not an easy topic, but increased use of public transit will continue to face challenges in both Westmount and Montreal, in particular because of the lingering risks of COVID-19 and its variants).

PAULO MARTELLI, UPPER ROSLYN AVE.

*Councillor Brzeski responds:* I wish to acknowledge receipt of your email and thank

you for taking the time to write to us to share your input.

## TIME TO STOP BURNING WOOD

I would like to express my concurrence with the article written by Penny Westman, committee member of the Westmount Healthy City Project ("Why are we still burning wood in Westmount?" March 30 p. 6).

It is not a matter of how many homeowners are trying to heat their homes using wood, be it in fireplaces or stoves. There are very few who are foolish enough to consider doing that although keeping a wood-burning fireplace in case of a power outage is certainly useful, which was a lesson learned during the ice storm of 1998. However, it is very difficult to try to sustain sufficient heat from a fireplace over a period of days and a generator is necessary for larger homes – another lesson learned during that ice storm.

Educating the public is not the answer. The science is already known. Wood burning fireplaces have to be phased out and it is necessary to pass a by-law in that regard. A pellet stove is certainly a worthwhile alternative but *continued on p. 7*

Correction:  
Contactivity grant

The total supporting grant provided to the Contactivity Seniors Centre in 2020 was \$65,015 and not \$140,000 as reported in the March 30 issue as a one-time special allocation. Its grant for 2021 was \$75,000 as mentioned "and we are grateful for every penny," states executive director Mary Stark.

## Clarification

A photo accompanying a story on water infiltration into the basement of a Mount Pleasant basement (April 6, p. 12) showed a typical trench leading to a house next door during the water work on the street and replacement of lead entries.

## WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

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## Good and bad sides of spring



one needs a fan to circulate the warm air that it produces and ventilation is difficult to do when there is a power outage.

Wood-burning fireplaces are problematic, even when they are not being used during the summer months, because of downdrafts. Having a glass front is not sufficient to prevent toxins from down drafting into the house. (I used to run a fan in the smoke chamber of a wood burning fireplace at a country house in St. Sauveur all summer to prevent downdrafts from occurring.)

Municipalities are not enforcing the requirement of having continuously filtered, fresh outside air changes throughout the house, which was first introduced 30 years ago in the National Building Code of Canada. In Quebec, the health-conscious objective got reinterpreted more than a decade later as being the need to install an air exchanger/heat recovery ventilator and most municipalities in Quebec are not even enforcing that condition (aside from the fact that those machines are a failed product).

The “PM 2.5” requirement regarding microscopic particles less than 2.5 µm (microns) adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the US makes the dangers of particulate matter

that size or smaller very clear.

It is time to pass a municipal by-law in that regard.

MORRIS CHARNEY, MELBOURNE AVE.

### SUPPORT FOR CHIN

I am so disgusted to learn about the treatment of a lovely man. This was written as a letter last week to the *Independent* (“Two troubling incidents, one important question,” p. 6).

I have had the privilege of speaking often to Mr. Stephen Chin around Westmount for a number of years. Yes, he does some exercising in Westmount Park, I believe daily, using a large weighted stick.

He is a gentleman, always smiling and kind. His treatment by the authorities smells of racism and ageism.

Mr. Chin, you have my apologies for this to have happened to you, and my support.

LESLEY AITON SPEVACK,  
DE MAISONNEUVE BLVD.

### MORE PRAISE FOR ST. LOUIS

A follow-up to: “Thanks for the loading zone” letter (March 30, p. 6):

When I was the councillor for Ward 1 (1991-1995), we used to call Bruce St. Louis “Mr. Can Do.”

It appears that he still “can do” and does.

GAIL JOHNSON, METCALFE AVE.

### Poetry showcase April 18

The Westmount Poetry Group is hosting a poetry showcase to “Celebrate Poetry Month!” on Sunday, April 18 at 11 am on Zoom. “Join us on Zoom where local poets will entertain us with their newest work,” says their announcement. To register, go to the library’s website at [westlib.org](http://westlib.org), then “Events,” “All events” and scroll to April 18. For more information, contact Daniel Míguez de Luca at 514.989.5530 or [dmiguez@westmount.org](mailto:dmiguez@westmount.org).

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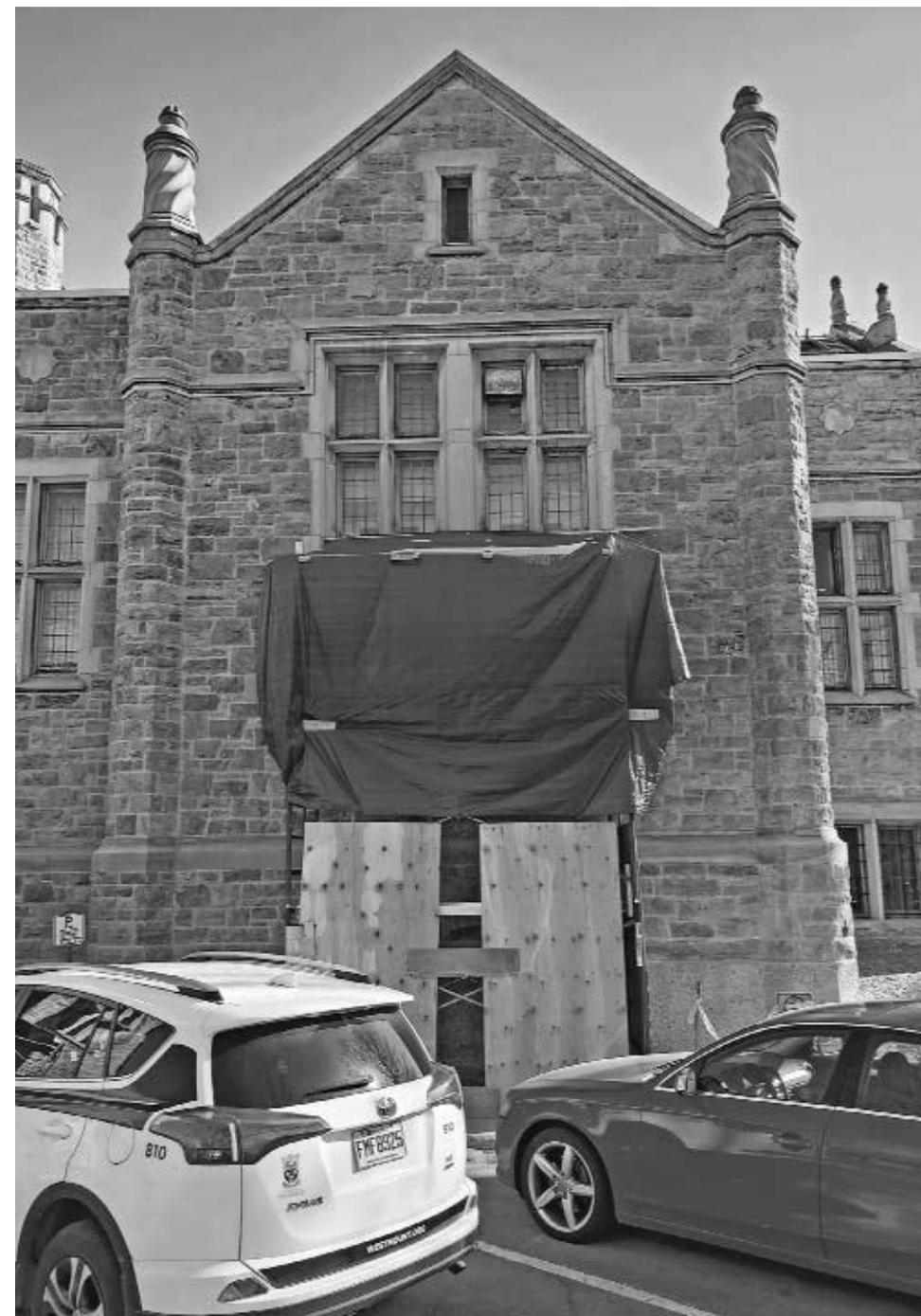


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Some of city hall's windows on its western façade (left), eastern façade (top right), and western basement level – complete with bars, as seen April 9.

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.

### *Windows, cont'd. from p. 1*

rotted wood will be replaced.”

While the work will not produce so-called energy efficient windows, the repairs and better caulking will go a long way toward reducing or eliminating drafts, St. Louis said.

Since a number of the windows are in office areas, the work is expected to require a lot of internal shuffling around. The timing this year, at least, during COVID is opportune since many employees are now working remotely.

The project will be going to tender within a month and is expected to start mid-summer, depending on who wins the contract. The intent is to complete about 60 percent of the work this year before the

onset of cold temperatures and complete the rest next year.

The city's permit also allows for work on frames of the air conditioning vents above the window openings. The vents were installed in the 1960s when the building was air conditioned.

### *Planning spans many years*

The project has been under discussion and subject to some indecision for many years as many window options were considered along with costs versus the use of contemporary facsimiles.

One replica model made of wood but using a plasticised cladding material that created a similar visual appearance to the

original has been moved around city hall for many years while a debate continued – until the model was finally being rejected as unacceptable for the castle-like landmark building dating to 1922.

This year, at last, the project is going forward under the city's record-setting \$27.2-million capital works budget approved in December. This follows masonry work in 1999 and the new roof of slate shingles last year that is just now being completed.

In a bid to help residents learn about restoring original windows, the city's Urban Planning department presented workshops with professionals during past Family Days and at the former Smart Living days in Victoria Hall.

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Capital campaign coming for masonry work

# Preventative netting in place at St. Matthias for repairs that can't wait

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Netting has been placed over parts of the stone facing on the outside wall at St. Matthias' Church on Côte St. Antoine Rd. to facilitate overdue masonry restoration work, a spokesperson for the church has told the *Independent*.

"The building is quite old – it's over a hundred years," said Dawn Hallas, the church's administrator.

She explained that some of the masonry between the stonework isn't as stable as it used to be and has been gradually disintegrating.

"So, until we get all that replaced, the netting is there to keep everything in place," she said. "Basically, it's a precaution."

According to Hallas, the church has started to carry out some repairs that can't be delayed, although eventually the administration will be launching a capital campaign to finance an extensive renovation of the entire building.

She said the netting was placed over areas most in need of attention and as a precaution against anything falling, although nothing had fallen off so far, she added.



Seen here on March 31, St. Matthias' Church on Côte St. Antoine Rd. has had netting placed over its stonework as a precaution while masonry repair work is being carried out.

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TAC recommends move after survey of households from Sherbrooke to de Maisonneuve

## Possible west-to-east Lansdowne parking shift now in council's hands

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

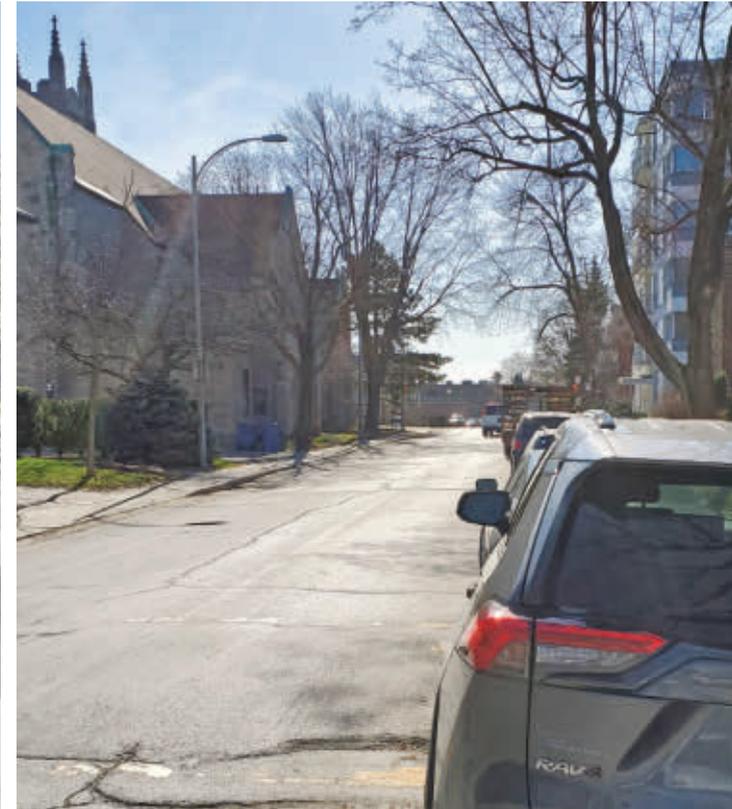
City council April 6 tabled minutes of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) dated March 3 that recommend the city "move forward" with a proposed shift of the parking lane from the west to the east side of Lansdowne in the block south of Sherbrooke. This is consistent with the blocks to the north and south.

Councillor Marina Brzeski, who represents the involved District 5, announced the recommendation, saying that city council would be discussing "the next step" at its next general committee meeting.

The TAC minutes state that a total of 45 participants submitted a response to a survey of households in the concerned block and that the majority of the participants were in favour of the shift "for safety reasons" to take place "in the spring of 2021."

It also recommends "that a communication be sent to the residents explaining the change before implementing it."

The shift in parking has been spearheaded over the years by resident Richard Lock and came to the fore when the city created a shared bicycle/vehicle lane southbound on the west side (see story March 2, p. 3).



Views April 9 from the under-discussion block of Lansdowne looking north, left, and south to east-side parking blocks, which may now become the norm from Sherbrooke to de Maisonneuve too.

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.

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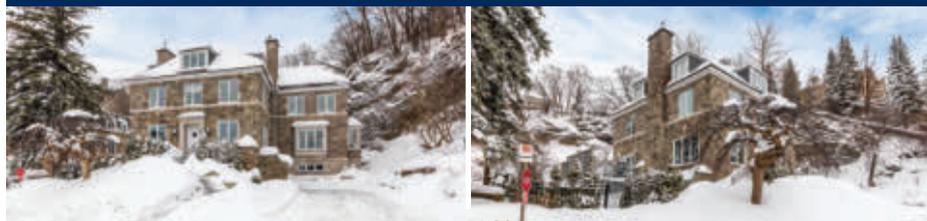
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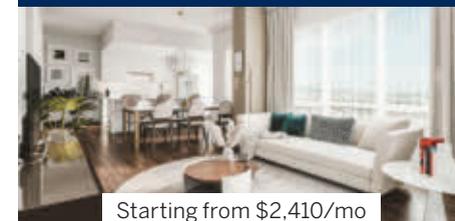


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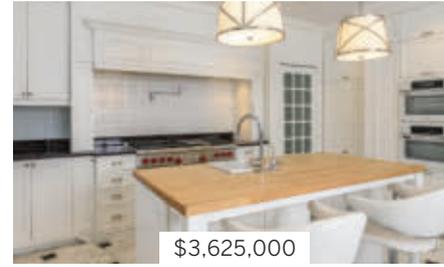
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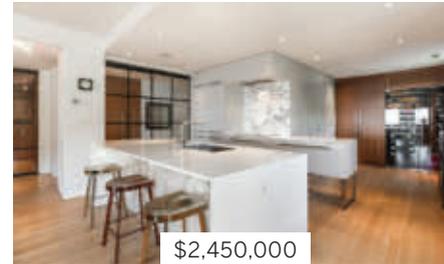
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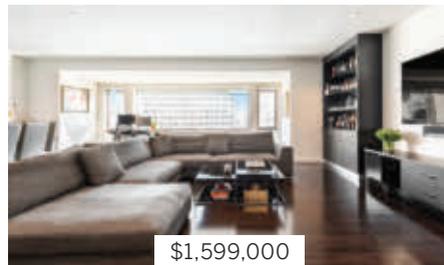
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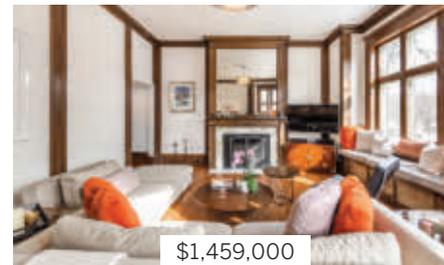
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# We all want to know more about COVID-19 vaccination



There are many reasons to get vaccinated, including protecting ourselves from the complications and dangers caused by infectious diseases, but also to stop the return of infectious diseases that are avoidable through vaccination.

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign now underway is aimed at preventing serious complications and death from COVID-19. We also use vaccination as a way of protecting our healthcare system and getting back to a more normal life.

## When did the vaccination campaign start?

COVID-19 vaccination in Québec began in December 2020 with the delivery of the first vaccine doses. Because the availability of vaccine is limited, categories of people deemed at higher risk of developing COVID-19 complications have been given priority. As more vaccine becomes available in Canada, the categories of recipients will be extended.

## Order of priority of recipients of COVID-19 vaccines

- 1 Vulnerable people and people with a significant loss of autonomy who live in residential and long-term care centres (CHSLDs) or in intermediate and family-type resources (RI-RTFs)
- 2 Workers in the health and social services network who have contact with users
- 3 Autonomous or semi-autonomous people who live in private seniors' homes (RPAs) or in certain closed residential facilities for older adults
- 4 Isolated and remote communities
- 5 People 80 years of age or older
- 6 People 70 to 79 years of age
- 7 People 60 to 69 years of age
- 8 Adults under 60 years of age who have a chronic disease or health problem that increases the risk of complications of COVID-19
- 9 Adults under 60 years of age who do not have a chronic disease or health problem that increases the risk of complications, but who provide essential services and have contact with users
- 10 Everyone else in the general population at least 16 years of age

## What supply strategy was used to acquire the vaccines?

The Government of Canada signed advance purchase agreements for seven promising COVID-19 vaccines with the following companies: AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Medicago, Moderna, Novavax, Pfizer and Sanofi Pasteur/GlaxoSmithKline. The purchases are conditional upon approval of these vaccines by Health Canada.

To date, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been approved for distribution in Canada. Soon, other vaccines from these companies will be used to speed up COVID-19 vaccination.



## What types of COVID-19 vaccines are being studied?

There are three types of vaccine currently being studied.

- 1 mRNA vaccines:** These vaccines contain part of the RNA of the virus which has the ability to make the S protein located on the surface of the virus. Once the RNA messenger is inside our cells, they make proteins similar to those on the surface of the virus using the instructions provided by the RNA messenger. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it. The RNA fragment is quickly destroyed by cells. There is no risk that this RNA will alter our genes.
- 2 Viral vector vaccines:** These contain a weakened version of a virus that is harmless to humans. Once in the body, the vaccine enters our cells and gives them instructions to make protein S. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it. Once in the body, the vaccine enters our cells and gives them instructions to make protein S. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it.
- 3 Protein subunit vaccines:** These contain non-infectious fragments of proteins that mimic the envelope of the virus. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it.

## Will an mRNA vaccine alter our genetic code?

**No.** Messenger RNA does not enter the cell's nucleus or come into contact with the nucleic DNA. As such, it cannot alter our DNA in any way.

## How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

When someone receives the vaccine against the virus that causes COVID-19, their body starts to defend itself against the virus. An immune reaction occurs which neutralizes the virus producing antibodies and activating defense cells.

Most COVID-19 vaccines in development prompt the production of antibodies to block protein S; the protein that allows the virus to infect the human body. This prevents the virus from entering and infecting human cells.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is composed of strands of ribonucleic acid (RNA) genetic material surrounded by a crown-like envelope with proteins that include the S (spike) protein, hence the name "coronavirus."



## What side effects can be expected from injection with the COVID-19 vaccine?

Some minor side effects may occur, such as redness or pain at the injection site and fatigue, fever or chills. These symptoms are less common among vaccine recipients over the age of 55, are usually benign and do not last long.

As of now there are no known serious side effects from mRNA vaccines. While other random problems may arise, such as a cold or gastroenteritis, they are not related to the vaccine per se.

Because the vaccine does not contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus, it is not capable of causing COVID-19. However, people who come into contact with the virus in the days leading up to their vaccination or within 14 days of receiving the vaccination could still develop symptoms and get the COVID-19 disease.

As such, following health measures remains important until such time as a majority of the population has been vaccinated.

## Why did it take 40 years to develop a flu vaccine but only nine months for one against COVID-19?

Past efforts, particularly during the SARS epidemic in 2003, advanced coronavirus vaccine research and accelerated the fight against COVID-19.

There are currently over 50 COVID-19 vaccines undergoing clinical trials around the world, the result of unprecedented scientific cooperation. Considerable financial and human resources have been invested in the development of vaccines that meet regulatory requirements in such a short span of time.

Public health and regulatory authorities in many countries, including Canada, are working hard to ensure that as many safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines as possible become quickly available to their populations.

## Why are two vaccine doses required?

The second dose "reminds" the immune system to continue producing antibodies and ensures long-term protection. In current circumstances, where COVID-19 is spreading very fast, administration of the second dose may be delayed somewhat to be able to vaccinate more people with the first dose.

[Québec.ca/COVIDvaccine](https://quebec.ca/COVIDvaccine)

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**Speaker: Group was able to help only 15 of 15,000 trafficking victims**

# COVID, human trafficking impact Central America, Cloutier tells Rotary

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

The COVID-19 pandemic has weakened the position of people in developing countries who rely on state social assistance, a Montreal-based member of Lawyers Without Borders Canada told the Rotary Club of Westmount.

Addressing the Rotarians on March 31 during an online Zoom version of the service organization's scheduled Wednesday noon-hour meetings, Arnaud Cloutier said COVID has negatively impacted conditions for individuals in places like Central America.

"What we saw since the beginning of the pandemic is that COVID has exacerbated all the existing vulnerabilities," said Cloutier, who has done legal work for LWBC since February 2018 as a volunteer lawyer in Colombia, as well as legal work for the Association for Human Rights in Peru.

## Human trafficking

Since March last year, Cloutier has also been working as a legal advisor at LWBC's head office in Quebec City on international issues pertaining to the fight against cor-

ruption, human trafficking and other issues. He is a registered member of the Quebec Bar and holds a masters in international law and politics from the University of Sherbrooke.

"The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer," he continued. "And because the poor depend much more on social services – on the services offered by the state, on public services for health – they rely on state protection. And what COVID has done, obviously, is it has affected the capacity of the state to give appropriate social assistance."

## Cloutier: Shelters need non-state support

He said shelters for victims of injustice run in South American countries by LWBC partner organizations can no longer rely on financial support from the state.

"So, this is where the international organizations and the international donors are very important in order to sustain those social services. In fragile countries, they don't have the same, I would say, layer of social protection as in the north. So, yes, every country has been affected by this [COVID]. And ultimately it affects much



Clockwise from the left, Arnaud Cloutier of Lawyers Without Borders Canada, Rotary Club of Westmount president Jim Fares and vice president Susan Buscemi.

more the vulnerable groups."

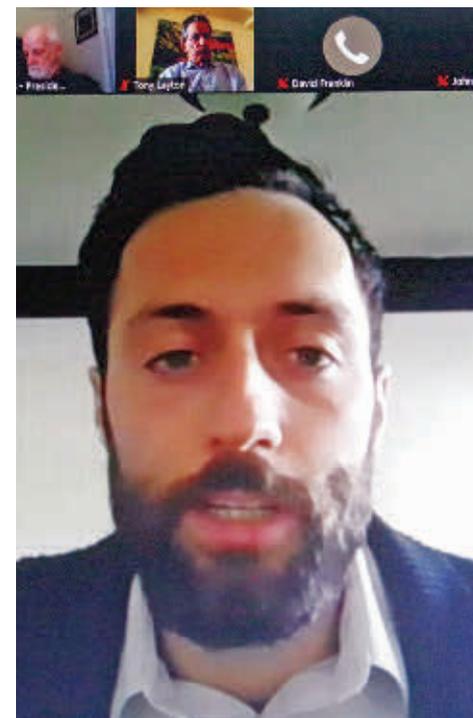
Regarding human trafficking, Cloutier called it "a particularly worrying phenomenon in the Americas."

Citing a 2018 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), he said girls represent the largest number of human trafficking victims in Central America, followed by women. Together, they account for 80 percent of all human trafficking in the region.

Also, according to the UNODC, the number of girls victimized by human trafficking in Central America is one of the highest percentages recorded worldwide. Cloutier said that in Guatemala alone, an estimated 15,000 girls are involved in sexual exploitation networks, while LWBC has managed to handle fewer than 15 successful legal cases in that country.

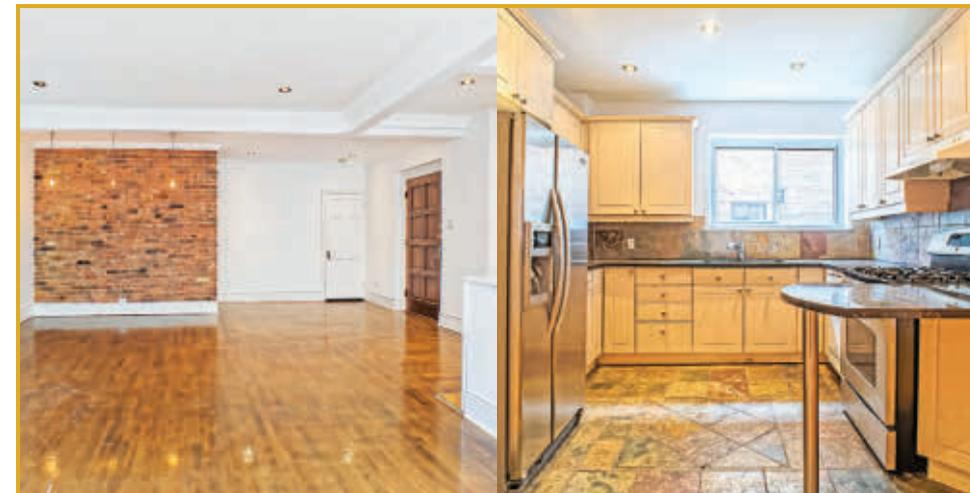
"So, we can see that there's a huge gap between the number of victims, the number of legal needs and access to justice, and the effective prosecution of this type of crime," he said. Cloutier was asked what a service organization like Rotary can do to help in the fight against human trafficking.

He suggested the most direct way would be for Rotarians to donate their services. For example, he said, some



Arnaud Cloutier of Lawyers Without Borders Canada.

Canadian lawyers offer their services on a *pro bono* basis to LWBC. "Any type of relevant service can be of use to us," he said.



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# Heads up!



This huge westbound truck ploughed through a red light at the intersection of Côte St. Antoine and Claremont on April 8 with just a few honks as warning, leaving northbound motorists scrambling. Note the green light for southbound Claremont traffic in photo #1, which had already turned yellow by photos #2 and 3, as well as the red Côte St. Antoine lights in photos 2 (centre left of photo) and 3 (right of photo). The truck's brakes seemed to be working fine, though, and it came to a stop just west of Claremont (top right). The truck right behind it was putting pilons out to mark fresh bike-path paint and it would seem that the first truck is a line-painting truck.

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.



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# Ascension Parish bids farewell to music director David Szanto

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

After 18 years as music director and organist at Westmount's Ascension of Our Lord Parish, David Szanto says some of his most vivid memories will be of the annual Christmas concerts – especially one year when the choir performed nearly the entire first part of Handel's Messiah.

And then there were the many times the choir would end rehearsals singing *a cappella* around the altar, because Ascension church's interior architecture provided what Szanto describes as a "unique sweet spot."

"Those are precious memories for me," said Szanto, who was busy packing recently before leaving for Toronto where he is starting a new life as the director of worship at a Baptist church, and to be with his wife, Cheryl, to whom he's been married for a year now.

David Szanto studied organ with John Grew at Montreal's McGill University, and "totally fell in love" with the city, he said. Although he wanted to travel a bit before settling down, he knew he would eventually find himself back in Montreal.

After finishing undergraduate music studies in Toronto, and then completing some additional music studies in the US,

the opportunity to return to Montreal came in 2003 when Ascension of Our Lord chose Szanto as its director of music and organist.

Montreal has the reputation of being a city where there is an abundance of churches, and where organs are also plenti-

ful. "There are finer organs in Montreal and there are much richer acoustics," said Szanto, pointing out that the churches in this city, with its historic Catholic heritage, tend to be larger and have richer acoustical properties.

"There really is a unique organ culture

here in Montreal. And not just unique in Canada, but really in the world. This is one of the principal organ capitals, so to speak."

A post placed on the Ascension of Our Lord website since March 31 pays tribute to Szanto, while noting the special efforts he made to have the parishioners appreciate and understand the worthiness of the parish's own organ, the Casavant Opus 1344, first installed in 1928.

Don Taddeo, one of Ascension Parish's six wardens, said Szanto "brought the very best out of our organ, but especially our choir."

An organ restoration project became part of an improvements program now under way at the church following a successful fundraising campaign last year.

Out of \$1.5 million raised in the fundraiser, a third has been earmarked to restore the organ. The work is being carried out by the renowned organ-building company Casavant Frères of St. Hyacinthe.

"Our hope is to be able to make the organ available to the larger community," said Taddeo, while adding that the parish plans to work in conjunction with organizers of the Canadian International Organ Competition so that Ascension church can become a venue for future organ performances, rehearsals and competition events.

## Beating the COVID blues



A pair of boxers in Westmount Park on April 8.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

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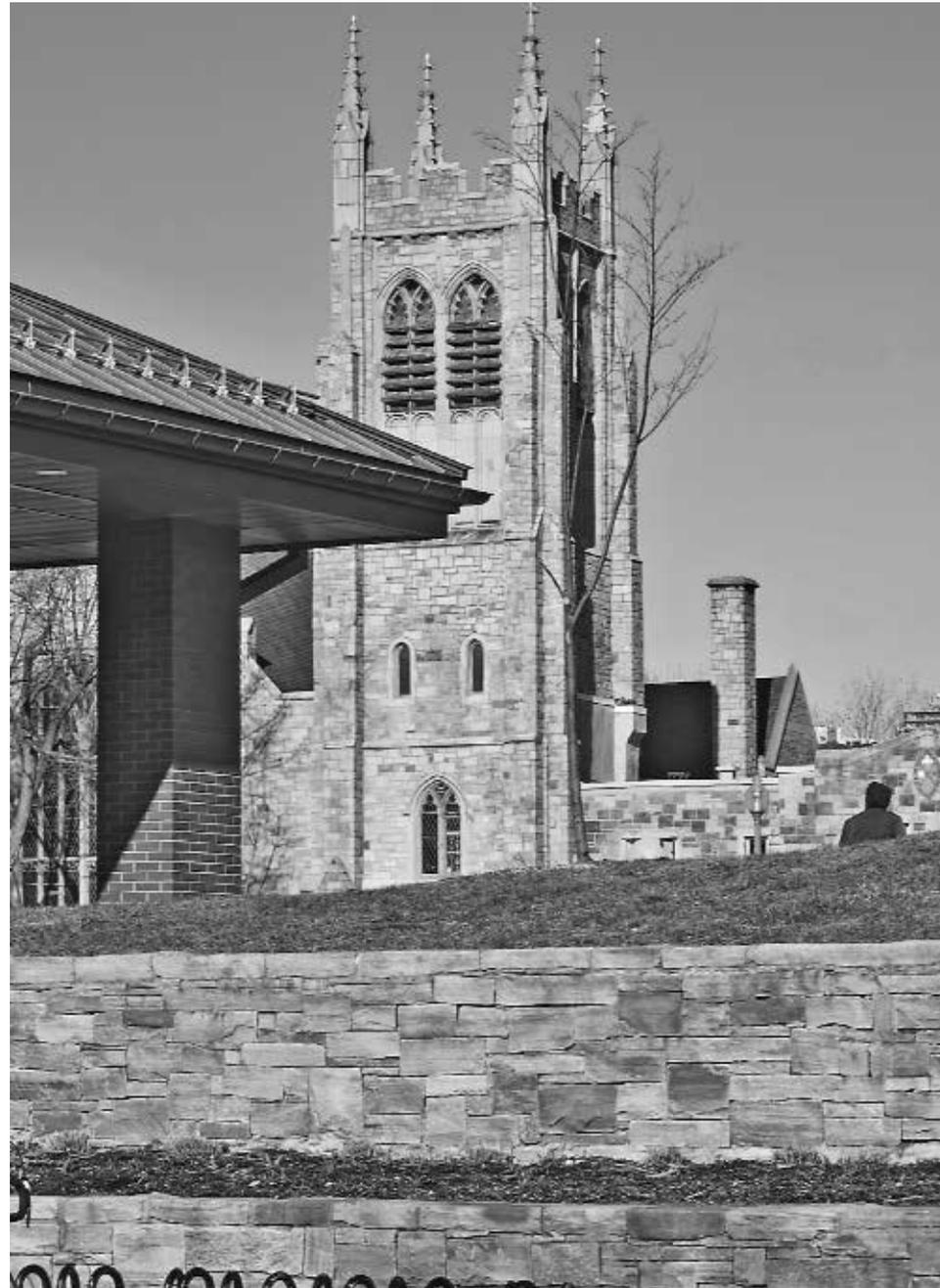
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## Zero-carbon emissions by 2040?



The Westmount recreation centre, including its green roof, was “Gold” certified in 2015 by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Canada, which used a points system to evaluate energy, environmental and innovative aspects of the 2013 building (see March 3, 2015, p. 10).

At the March 15 city council meeting, questions from two members of Westmount Healthy City Project focused on climate change. Ross Brown raised the issue of zero-carbon targets while Susan Grundy asked for the creation of a citizens’ environmental advisory committee. They are both excellent ideas, and the question is how to establish targets and an effective committee.

### Carbon-neutral goal

Global warming in excess of 1.5°C – predicted between 2030 and 2052 – will increase extreme weather events and impact food production. While Quebec’s electricity sources – water and wind – are renewable, buildings heated with fossil fuels and transportation emissions are ongoing problems. Setting multiple targets – whether the electrification of Westmount’s fleet, heating retrofits or tree-planting – are key to community success.

The fact is Westmount – as a member of the island of Montreal agglomeration – has certain targets set out in the Montréal Zero-Waste Plan 2020-2025, including a 50-percent reduction in food waste.

How best to meet these targets? Emulate successful communities high on Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation” such as the Manchester borough of Rochdale in England or Horst aan de Maas in The Netherlands.

To reach carbon neutrality by 2038, Rochdale – population 218,000 – has established an ambitious tree-planting program. In contrast, Horst aan de Maas established a heat transition plan to reduce natural gas use in home heating by 2050. As this community of 42,000 set the national record for the least household waste seven years in a row, their recycling rate – 95 percent

– is a source of community pride.

Like many municipalities, Rochdale council signed a climate emergency declaration in 2019. The borough, however, went further to appoint and delegate authority to an expertise-driven citizens’ Climate Emergency Working Group. Led by a councillor, this committee recommended a new post of climate emergency officer as well as targets and strategies for 5-, 10- and 18-year intervals – all of which were approved.

Research on the Great Lakes environmental groups (Holifield, 2018) confirms the importance of including citizens in environmental decision-making: “Such strategies include balancing tight networks with an openness to new members, supplementing formal hearings with social gatherings, making participation socially meaningful, and dividing labour between managers and advisory committees.”

How could we achieve this in Westmount?

First, create an environmental register of citizen consultants with expertise or community experience from environmental engineering to plant biodiversity. Second, appoint from this list volunteers to set targets or strategies and serve on a permanent environmental committee with key councillors and managers. Third, create – or redefine – a position of sustainability director to coordinate annual metrics as well as short- and long-term carbon-neutral strategies with all departments.

### Imagine carbon neutral

The response by Mayor Smith and Councillor Brzeski to questions by Brown and Grundy was positive. As commissioner of sustainability and accessibility, Brzeski commented on carbon reduction: “It makes a lot of sense to look at that within the process *Imagine 2040*.” It does indeed and with citizen participation and an active, environmental citizen-council-manager committee – as in Europe – success should follow.

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## Spring = Bixi



Bixi stands had already been set up in Westmount last week, including some with bikes. From top left, clockwise: at Marianopolis College CEGEP on Westmount Ave., at Victoria Hall, in front of city hall and École Internationale on Côte St. Antoine, on Greene at de Maisonneuve, at Dawson College CEGEP, and on Hillside Lane near Westmount High.

Gwendolyn's Pet Garden *has the answer*

## Renaud addresses the longing of children for a pet

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

For every child who longs to have a pet, or even maybe one who wants a garden: Westmount children's author Anne Renaud combines both in her latest book *Gwendolyn's Pet Garden*. It's her third in two months.

The story is about Gwendolyn who wanted a pet more than a pair of polka-dotted rain boots or a telescope – more than anything. She pestered, argued and bartered for a dog or cat, tarantula, lobster, gerbil, cockatoo or macaw. “I want a pet to care for,” she pleaded. But to no avail.

Then, she was given a small patch of earth to care for, borrowed “a great book of gardening” and turned to her library's seed lending library to obtain seeds, which she planted and watered. Every day she talked

to the garden. Eventually, the soil began “playing more and more tricks” as small leaves began poking out.

Every stage of their growth and care is recorded page by page in brightly coloured illustrations from Rashin Kheiriyeh.

As the plants develop, Gertrude, Boris, Mortimer, Cordelia and others are named, taking on lives as Gwendolyn's pets – all actually rooted in reality, according to Renaud. “My niece was unable to have a pet because of allergies,” she explained last week. “So it was for her that I wrote this story inspired by how she began caring for some seeds in her family's garden.”

### Nurturing seeds

In fact, Renaud said, there are many reasons why children can't have pets but they

might be able to nurture some seeds in pots on a balcony, for example.

In Renaud's trademark epilogue – this time called “Growing your pet garden” – she provides many growing tips. “Did you know that more and more children are discovering the joy of gardening?” she notes. It helps children learn about the life cycle of plants, responsibility for their care and even how to obtain the seeds.

And this is where her Westmount background comes into focus. When she suggests children may obtain seeds from a “seed lending library,” the accompanying illustration depicts the recognizable indexed collection at Westmount Public Library.



“If there is no seed lending library where you live,” Renaud concludes, “why not encourage your library or community to set up their own?”

Published by Penguin Random House, the book has a May 4 launch date and is already on order by the library, according to Westmount children's librarian Wendy Wayling. This is Renaud's third book to be published in the last two months targeting the 5-to-8 year age category. The others are *Les oreilles de Chester* and *Je Suis Un Livre* (see story March 2, p. 23).

A Westmount resident, Renault works at city hall as executive assistant to Mayor Christina Smith.



Spring = Bixi (2)

Bixi bikes en route on Atwater south of Sherbooke April 9.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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LYSANNE FOWLER

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He is healthy and active, up to date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped. Please contact the Montreal SPCA at their [www.sPCA.com](http://www.sPCA.com) website and refer to Igor's identification number 47005510 to fill out the reduced-fee adoption application presented on the link, before arrangements for a visit at the shelter.

Your neighbour,  
Lysanne

## Igor the gentlecat



## Consensus: It's a peregrine falcon



Resident Harry Bloomfield received three responses from his avian query of March 30 (p. 5). It turns out that this bird nesting at St. Joseph's Oratory is a peregrine falcon.

PHOTO COURTESY OF H. BLOOMFIELD.

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We welcome your letters but reserve the right to choose and edit them. Please limit to 300 words and submit before Friday 10 am to be considered for publication the following week.

*email us at:*
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## Police Report

# Car break-in suspect faces ‘trespassing at night’ charge

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

A male suspect seen by witnesses and recorded on video while trying the doors of cars parked in driveways and on the street near Westmount and Belmont avenues early on April 3 has been charged with “trespassing at night” after being detained by Public Security and arrested by the Montreal police.

According to a definition of the offence given in the Criminal Code of Canada, “Every person who, without lawful excuse, loiters or prowls at night on the property of another person near a dwelling-house situated on that property is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.”

Station 12 community relations officer Adalbert Pimentel said the suspect was seen by Public Security between midnight and 1:45 am attempting to commit theft from vehicles.

“He was going from car to car testing the doors,” he said, while adding that as the suspect was doing this, he was also seen trespassing onto private properties while trying the door handles on cars parked there.

Pimentel said Public Security officers were the first to spot the suspect.

“When they saw the infraction, they followed the individual, and they detained

him after catching him in an active infraction, and then they called the police,” Pimentel said.

Upon their arrival, police officers from Station 12 took down the facts, arrested the suspect, read him his rights, then searched him and determined he wasn’t carrying any tools that could be used in the commission of a crime.

According to Pimentel, the suspect “was known” already from police records. “He’s been intercepted a few times for similar situations, such as checking door handles on cars to see if they’re unlocked,” he said.

In the ensuing investigation, the police went to several nearby homes to see if they had security cameras pointed out to the street that might have captured images of the suspect committing the alleged infraction. As it turned out, one home owner did. The images could now become part of the evidence.

### Party broken up

One person was arrested after police from Station 12 broke up a noisy party at a home on St. Catherine St. near Melville Ave. in the early morning hours of April 4.

Between 4:15 and 5:20 am, the officers were on the scene, together with Westmount Public Security, while waiting initially for a warrant to be issued that would allow them to enter the premises.

As they were waiting, according to an incident report filed by the police, an individual was seen exiting the dwelling through a rear door into the back yard and fleeing. “It was Public Security that actually caught the individual behind the building,” said Pimentel.

After identifying the partyer who attempted to flee, the police officers ran a record check and found that he was breaching court-imposed conditions stemming from a criminal charge he was already facing. As well, he was charged with break-

ing COVID-19 sanitary rules and the 9:30 pm to 5 am COVID-19 curfew.

Following the suspect’s arrest, a body search revealed he was also in possession

of narcotics and he may be facing an additional charge related to this. None of the other persons in the dwelling were charged or ticketed, added Pimentel.

## Clarke/de Mais. work begins



Workers were unloading metal covers used during road excavation on Clarke north of de Maisonneuve April 9. As previously reported (March 23, p. 19), the city of Montreal will be doing rehabilitation work on a primary water main in that area this summer.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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## Retail Review

VERONICA REDGRAVE

# 'Royal sheep' arrives in Vic village

Toys are bright, sustainable and fun. Enticing Wobble boards sit in one corner. Different sizes of rainbow-arched blocks offer an appealing way of learning colours and

shapes. Puppets and arts and crafts items make perfect anytime gifts.

"We also carry a few pieces of clothing for adults," Krolik said. (After all, children can't have all the fun.)

**MOUTON ROYAL**  
39 Somerville (west of Victoria)  
Monday: closed  
Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday: 11 am to 4 pm  
Saturday: closed  
Sunday: 12 noon to 4 pm  
Also open by private appointment.



Where once hand-made ceramics captured the eye (at Farfelu), a fun new shop has emerged near the Visual Arts Centre. Mouton Royal is a "general store for young families," explained owner Loren Krolik.

She named it after her daughter's favourite things: princesses and sheep. How charming is that?

Having two young ones, she understands how sometimes shopping can be trying with children, so she has appointed a play area boasting a cuddly photo of llamas by Alana Block. The arched room with its vintage-looking pressed-tin ceiling offers toys ("washable, and each one washed after use") and a soft mat to occupy little people while parents admire the clothes ("0 to 7 years") and home goods.

I noticed a lot of beautiful textured bamboo items, their natural surface echoing the mood of the store. The carefully curated collection showcases ethically, sustainably and thoughtfully made goods.

Clothing is laid out nicely instead of often-clanging hangers. The folded items invite handling. "Fabrics are natural."

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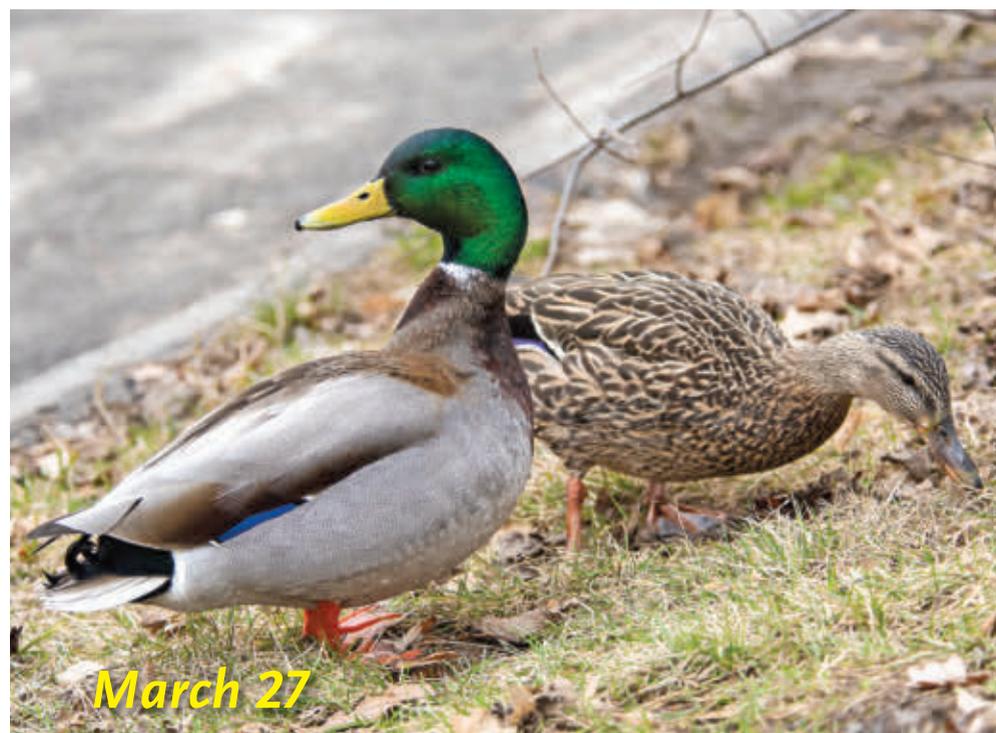
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## First ducks of the season



March 23



March 27

PHOTOS: HEATHER BLACK (LEFT) AND RALPH THOMPSON (RIGHT).

We reported March 30 (p. 23) that we had noticed the first ducks of the season March 25. While this was true of the newspaper's in-house photographer, two contributors were also vying for the prize.

"Don't tell Heather, but the ducks are back," emailed Ralph Thompson to the *Independent's* editor, all the while copying fellow nature observer Heather Black. "A male and female mallard were spotted

along the edge of the lagoon in Westmount Park March 27."

"You're too late, Ralph! But I have had a good chuckle. I took this photograph March 23!" replied Black.

"Darn, thought I beat you," conceded Thompson.



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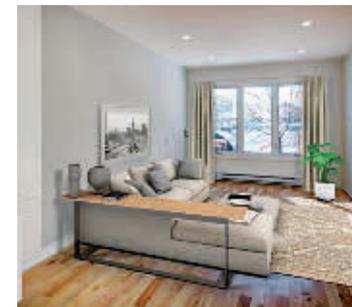
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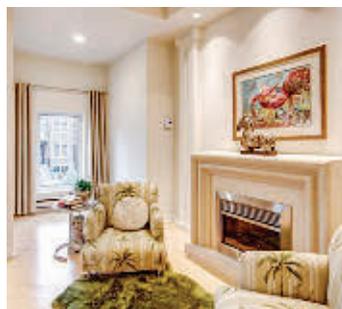


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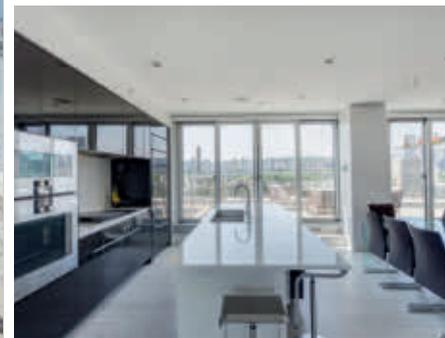
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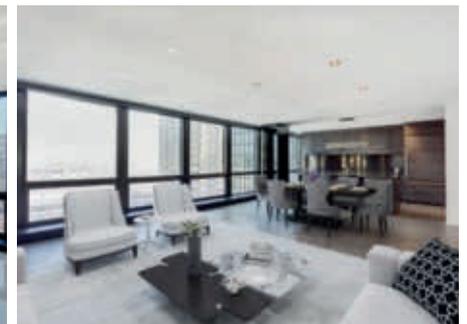
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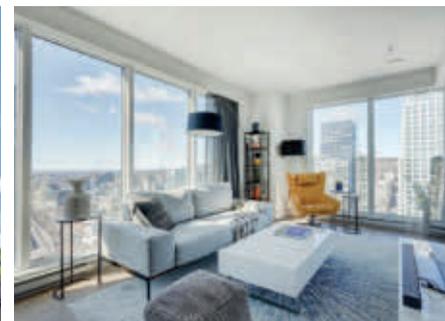
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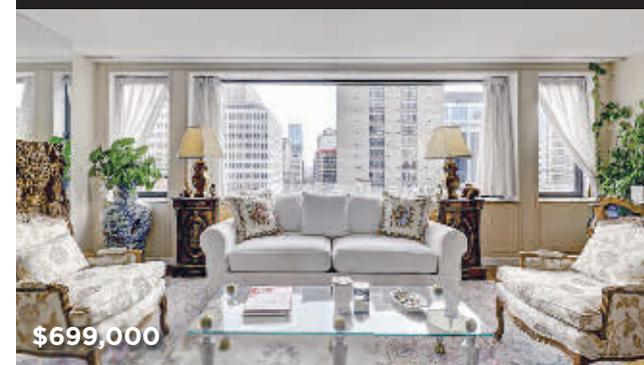
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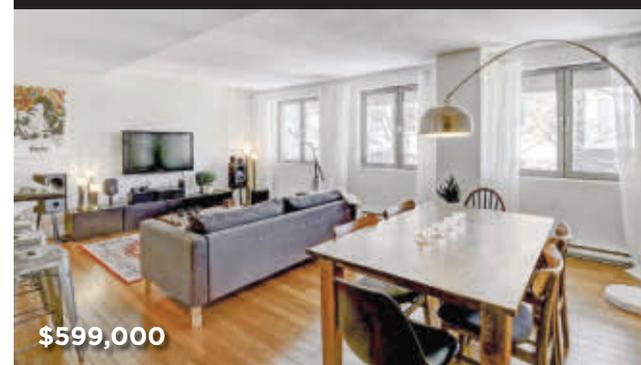
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