

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

Weekly. Vol. 17 No. 3c

We are Westmount

March 21, 2023

Hockey finals moved to other rinks

3-day blue-collar strike shuts down activities at WRC

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The latest three-day strike by the city's blue collar workers March 14, 15 and 16 closed Sports and Recreation activities at the Westmount recreation centre (WRC), but none of its programs were affected at Victoria Hall, said department director Dave Lapointe.

During the closure of the Westmount rinks, the hockey playoffs that had been scheduled to play in Westmount were moved to Lachine and St. Laurent, said WRC operations manager Andrew Maislin, who was organizing the playoffs being hosted by Westmount. "Our partners picked up to help out. Offers had come from

others as well."

The strike also shut down the conservatory and greenhouses as well as the Gallery (after 5 pm) at Victoria Hall and garbage collection in the parks and other areas where this is not handled by independent contractors.

Regular curbside service for residences was not affected.

The workers belong to local 301 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees CUPE (Syndicat des cols bleus regroupés de Montréal SCFP) some of whom had attended the city council meeting February 6 to air their grievances (see story February 14, p. 1). They have been without a collective agree- *continued on p. 9*

Westmount cannon début at St. Patrick's parade



This contingent at Montreal's St. Patrick's Day parade, held March 19, included a group of Ukrainian refugees, the city of Westmount's two restored 1810 cannon, cadets from the 2nd Field Artillery Regiment, and Westmount Battery president and former city councillor Patrick Martin, at right. The battery is a volunteer organization of re-enactors and preservationists. It is the first time that the Westmount cannon have taken part in the parade (see March 14, p. 1). "We will be honouring them," Martin had said beforehand about the participation of the refugees.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

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Spring work to start

Playing fields to be maintained by last year's contractor

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The annual maintenance of Westmount's playing fields is expected to get under way with spring care now that the contract was approved by city council March 6. Won again by Pelouse Santé for a maximum of \$92,522 including tax credits, it was described as the lowest conforming bidder.

This involves the fields at King George (Murray) Park, the Westmount Athletic Grounds (WAG) and all the fields in Westmount Park along Academy Rd. and Melville Ave., according to Andrew Maislin, operations manager for the Westmount recreation centre.

While regular work is carried out by city workers over the summer, the "heavier" aspects such *continued on p. 3*

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Call for medical assistance after fall in park

Quiet during school spring break: Public Security

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

The school spring break of last week – mainly for private schools, of which there are many in Westmount – resulted in a very quiet period in the city, said Public Security director Greg McBain.

With many families away on vacation, the streets and number of disturbances or mischief in the parks were few. In fact, the only notable incident, he said, was a call for an older woman who had fallen and required medical assistance. While there have been several reports of falls in streets over the previous two or three weeks, this one occurred in Westmount Park near or on the bike path.

The call was recorded March 11 at 2:42 pm, when a responding officer found a resident of the Place Kensington seniors'

Playing fields, cont'd from p. 1

as seeding, sodding and fertilizing has been out-sourced several times to Pelouse Santé.

While the fields will be well used soon starting with the popularity of spring soccer, even a small amount of growth from re-seeding will be welcome, Maislin said.

residence sitting on a snow bank near the gazebo. She was reported to have tripped, scraping her forehead and nose, and hurting her left hand.

Identified as age 95, she and an accompanying caregiver were driven back to the nearby residence where a nurse was waiting to treat the woman's injuries.

Meeting to be held on 4998 de Mais. zoning request

Area residents were informed by the city by mail last week that an information meeting would be held on a zoning change request by the owner of the 4998 de Maisonneuve residential and office apartment complex, located at Claremont. It is being held at city hall on Wednesday, March 22 at 7 pm. The request concerns the parking ratio and dwelling sizes required/permitted in the zone.

DON'T MISS OUR PULL-OUT Spotlight

'Real estate' includes retail!

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Council approves goals for improving accessibility

2023 Action Plan calls for work in parks, websites

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

As the city began emerging this year from pandemic restrictions in 2021 and 2022, some of its deferred goals to improve accessibility “concerning persons with disabilities” have been added to those for this year’s and some are now under way, according to Westmount’s 2023 annual Access Report.

Others designated for this year are among those approved at the city council meeting March 6 and released last week. These include obstacles and measures identified by various departments that also aim to ease access for people pushing baby carriages or experiencing temporary mobility challenges.

“The purpose of this plan is to eliminate barriers that prevent the full inclusion of people with disabilities in educational, professional and community life,” explains Mayor Christina Smith in an introduction to the report.

Based on estimates for communities of Westmount’s size of 19,938 in 2022, the report states, this number could apply to some 4,000 persons.

The report is required by Quebec for

municipalities of 15,000 or more residents and is prepared for Westmount by an internal working group of city employees comprising Maureen Lafrenière (Communications), Chris Rogers (Urban Planning) and Andrew Laplante (Engineering). It is expected to be posted on the city’s website under Environment/Accessibility along with an accompanying Access Guide, a local initiative of the former Healthy City Project.

Reasons reported for project deferrals include supply chain issues and a lack of personnel during the COVID years.

Some ongoing projects from previous years include a re-design of the city’s website and the installation of pedestrian call buttons with audio or tactile technologies at some intersections, which were postponed by Hydro Westmount “due to a lack of electricians.” A pilot project is planned for the first quarter of 2023.

Parks, website, library for 2023

A handful of measures also listed for this year include work on the Sherbrooke St. entrance to the Westmount Public Library to correct water accumulation from the roof that may cause run-off at the door

and improvements to the ramp.

Also at the library, the purchase of equipment such as listening devices or hearing loops is slated for announcement in the fall. This comes on the heels January 1 of the library’s abolition of fines for overdue material to improve accessibility to the library, following a previous fine discontinuance in the children’s section.

A re-design of the city’s website already under way in 2022 to be completed this year is aimed at providing easier navigation, particularly for persons with visual impairments; also to be launched late in the year as part of the city’s website is a new Hydro Westmount portal to ease access to accounts.

Listed for this year but already accomplished is introducing programs designed by the Sports and Recreation department to offer self-defence and first-aid courses for seniors and young people to increase their confidence in going out in public (see story February 14, p. 5).

Work in city parks includes completion of accessible play structures at Devon, replacement of accessible drinking fountains at Westmount Park and improvements to *continued on p. 5*

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Library honours Miriam Tees at 100



PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY.

After a lifetime of studies, volunteering, music and library work, Westmounter Miriam Tees was presented March 15 with tulips and a card signed by members of the staff from the Westmount Public Library and the city's Community Events office for her 100th birthday. Tees, who holds degrees in library science and music from McGill, continues to work as a volunteer, including recently at the Friends of the

Library book sale.

"Miriam is a wonderful inspiration to us all and is an amazing supporter of the Westmount Library," said Donna Lach, assistant director, who made the presentation. "She is so busy that during my visit to her home yesterday, I interrupted her as she was diligently taking the minutes to a meeting she was attending on Zoom for the book sale."

pathways at Westmount and King George (Murray) parks.

2022 action results

Among measures taken to improve accessibility in 2022 were creation of a new team of officers by the Public Security Unit to participate in activities with seniors – namely the Contactivity Seniors' Centre – to help ease isolation and increasing the

number of persons signing up for the vulnerable persons registry.

The city's own Access Guide, not specifically required by Quebec, is reported to be updated as much as possible but depends on input by local merchants and businesses. Some remain inaccessible and have been deferred from 2021, though a first message was sent to merchants in 2021, according to this year's action plan.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MORE TO LABOUR DISPUTE THAN ADVERTISED

This is in reference to the [*Les bleus méritent mieux!*] ad in March 14's *Independent* (p. 13) from the blue-collar union regarding a three-day strike in Westmount.

Full disclosure: I'm a recently retired white-collar employee of the city of Westmount and also a Westmount resident.

The Westmount blue-collar residents deserve better than what? I used to attend union meetings and the Montreal union representatives would say the city of Westmount should agree to its demands as it is rich.

What does the wealth of its residents have to do with monetary demands? Are the unions taking pay cuts in poorer boroughs?

"Rising inflation" has hit everyone hard. The blue-collar contract expired December 31, 2019, and when I left in 2021, the union still hadn't submitted its demands for a new collective agreement.

As far as "deteriorating workplace climate," there are systems in place to find solutions.

Lastly, I appreciate the work they do (e.g. keeping the sidewalks in my neighbourhood clear in the winter, Hydro Westmount keeping our power on, etc.). I hope they reach a reasonable agreement soon.

ANN McWHINNIE, (NOT A WEALTHY RESIDENT OF) DE MAISONNEUVE BLVD.

DELIGHTED BY GREENE'S UPCOMING STREET FURNITURE, BUT NOT ITS PRICE

Last year (May 24, p. 6), the *Independent*

published a letter of mine, wherein I registered my concern about Greene Ave. To my delight, I see that the city will be replacing those hideous picnic tables with something that is hopefully more in keeping with what we would like the street to resemble.

But on the other hand, the city has committed the princely sum of \$120,000 towards the purchase of new furniture, which is a terrible waste of our taxpayer money. This type of spending by Westmount, for furniture that will likely be used for only six months of the year, is indicative of how our hard-earned taxpayer dollars are being spent. For instance, \$6.5 million for the reconstruction of Lexington, millions of dollars for windows at city hall, over-priced renovations to libraries and other city buildings, all leading to the question as to who, if anyone, is watching our expenditures.

Sadly, council sees us as their piggy bank, and "constraint" is not a word that we hear at city hall these days.

JOE RUSSO, SHERBROOKE ST.

FEDERAL BILL C-13 ABANDONS QUEBEC ANGLOS, OPENS PANDORA'S BOX

Open letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

I am writing to express the profound concerns of the English-speaking community of Quebec about the current discussions in committee over revisions to the Official Languages Act, Bill C-13.

My organization represents thousands

of Canadians who support a moderate approach to language policy in Quebec. As you know, the act was passed in 1969 by your father's government after the extensive national discussions of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission, spearheaded by your father's mentor, Frank Scott.

The purpose of the law then and now was to ensure services to minority linguistic communities across the country, and support their capacity to work in their official language.

Since that time, the English-speaking community and its institutions have worked collaboratively with francophone minority communities to support one another. In fights for francophone school boards, provincial laws and support for the status of the French language, there has been solidarity.

Many people forget the expression "Two Solitudes" used by Hugh MacLennan in his book comes from a poem which states "Love consists of this: two solitudes that meet, protect and greet each other." Bill C-13 has many redeeming qualities, not the least of which is the effort to encourage the flourishing of the French language in the rest of Canada.

However, by encouraging the idea there is only one minority language group in Canada worth supporting, you are not only abandoning the anglophone community of Quebec in the short term, you are opening up a Pandora's Box that could lead to the elimination of jobs for English Quebecers in the federal public service and federally-regulated businesses, the elimination of English school boards via loss of Section 23 rights, and the continued marginalization of a community of 1.25 million Canadian citizens.

Your government has also managed to incorporate the egregious provincial law 96, and its unethical pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause, into federal legislation. Law 96 is nothing but a vengeful attack on our community. It does nothing to promote the French language and instead emphasizes the creation of a separate, ethnocentric, French-speaking nation-state in Quebec. This is the precursor of the independence of Quebec and the end of Canada as we know it.

While incorporating Law 96 into Bill C-13 might have been seen as a clever political ploy to appeal to so-called "soft nationalists," it is unprecedented and appalling. By collaborating with the Bloc Québécois, the Conservatives and NDP have shown their own lack of concern for Canada's future.

The only true leaders emerging from this mess are the handful of dissenting Lib-

eral MPs with the courage to speak out for Canadian values, notably Marc Garneau, Marc Miller, Anthony Housefather and Emmanuella Lambropoulos.

In short, your government's actions and those of Premier François Legault have put the English-speaking community of Quebec, Canadian official bilingualism and the unity of Canada in crisis.

Consequently, I call upon you to regain control of the legislative process, remove the references to the Charter of the French Language and reverse the harmful amendments being imposed by the opposition parties. If that is not possible, withdraw this extremely troubling legislation. Then you should call a national meeting of leaders of minority linguistic communities, and create a path for understanding and solidarity between our communities that leads to a stronger, more equitable Official Languages Act. As prime minister of Canada, your job as head of government (dating back to the Peace of Westphalia) is to ensure the security of your citizens. At this time, there are more than a million of your fellow Quebecers whose future is threatened. And you are putting the future of our country at risk by ignoring this crisis. We ask you to take on the responsibilities you have sworn to uphold, to protect our constitution and our laws, by acting forcefully and directly to protect the interests of the country we love.

ANDREW CADDELL, PRESIDENT,
TASK FORCE ON LINGUISTIC POLICY

PROVINCIAL LIBERAL DEFEAT IN ST. HENRI-ST. ANNE MIGHT NOT BE ONE-OFF

The recent by-election result in St. Henri-St. Anne indicates that the anglophone vote is no longer bought, sold and paid for by the Quebec Liberal Party. The riding is not predominantly a francophone one.

Admittedly, by-elections are the opportunity for a protest vote, and there was much for anglophones to protest about when it came to how they were treated by Liberals under Dominique Anglade.

So, what better place to demonstrate their disaffection than in her former riding? But it would be a mistake for the party to assume that this result is a one-off.

Regardless of their official opposition status, the Liberals don't present themselves as a government in waiting. And anglophones, generally speaking, have no time to waste on a party that is not credible in the eyes of the francophone voter. Those who do can vote for the Canadian Party of Quebec.

HOWARD GREENFIELD, HILLSIDE AVE.

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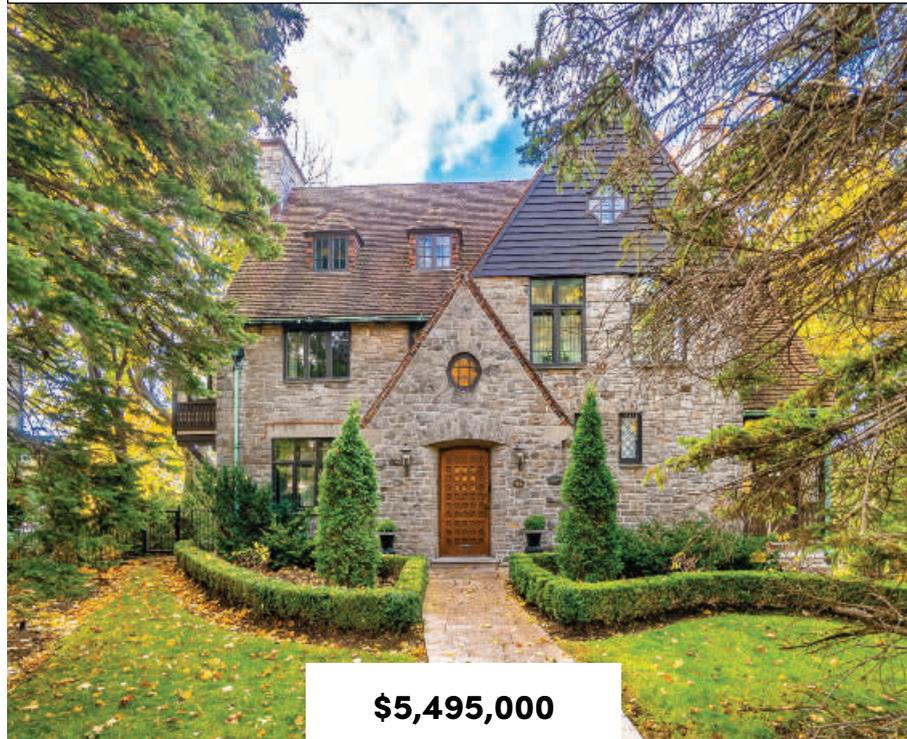
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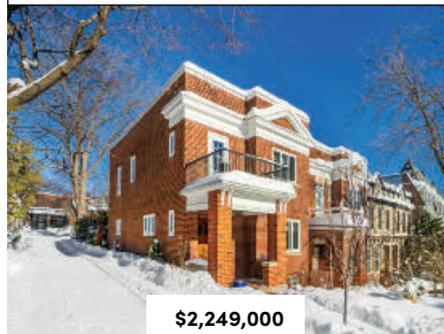
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What do the workers say?

City's blue-collar workers threaten longer strikes to come



Striking workers on Stanton St. adjacent to city hall on March 16.

BY JENNIFER BALL

More strikes by the city's blue-collar workers – that escalate in duration – are planned, unless gains on salary and working conditions are inked in a new contract. This according to three spokesmen: Alexis Lamy-Labrecque, who is a lawyer and an advisor for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE); Jason Wynarczuk, the

blue-collar delegate for Westmount; and Luc Bisson, who is the blue-collar union director and liaison officer for the consolidated blue-collar union of Montreal, local 301.

Lamy-Labrecque described the outcome of the last meeting with the city on February 10 as having resulted in little gain. "What they put on the table...if we sign it, we are sure that our members are going to get poorer at the end of the contract."

Lamy-Labrecque and Bisson are factoring into their negotiations that inflation in Quebec was 6.7 percent by the close of 2022 and it is 6.5 percent now, according to StatsCan.

Secondary to that, there is a demand for a revision to their schedule of work and working hours. Lamy-Labrecque said he wants the city of Westmount to adopt what the rest of the island of Montreal has permitted, and allow workers to work a four-day work week with longer hours worked during those four days.

"Westmount is one of the only towns in the city of Montreal that has a five-day work week," Lamy-Labrecque said, referring to Westmount's blue-collar worker's schedule

of work.

The biggest day for the strike was March 16 when blue-collar workers from other districts came to support the striking workers. The quarrel the strikers voiced – from Stanton St., at Sherbrooke St., beside city hall – could be heard from The Boulevard on the eastern perimeter of the city that day.

No plans were in place, though, to decamp to previous strike locations: Stanton St. north of Côte St. Antoine, the Bethune tunnel to the Public Works yard, or Victoria Hall, Lamy-Labrecque said.

The blue-collar workers include all the city's drivers, all the general labourers who work in the parks, the mechanics, the welders and the electricians.

The next meeting with the city is scheduled for April 4, but Bisson said strikes "will happen more and more until we get an agreement. It has to change... Is it possible that after three days, it is going to be four or five? My answer will be yes, and then maybe it will be more than five days. More than 98 percent of the members gave us a mandate to pressure and to go on strike."

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Police Report

How to protect your car from theft and vandalism

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

An indoor garage space and video surveillance are two deterrents a Montreal police spokesperson is recommending as probably the best safeguards following several recent car-related criminal incidents.

Sometime between 8 pm on March 12 and 8 am the following day, a GMC SUV was stolen after being parked by its owner in the driveway of a home near the corner of The Boulevard and Victoria Ave.

According to the police incident report, a surveillance camera in the vehicle wasn't activated at the time, nor were any other security cameras found by the investigators at nearby homes afterwards.

Audi scratched

In a second recent car-related incident, an Audi SUV parked near the corner of Sherbrooke St. and Claremont Ave. suffered scratches on both sides of its body, probably by someone using a key.

Although it was likely a random act, the perpetrator will face a charge of mischief should he or she be identified if images were recorded by nearby surveillance cameras.

When asked about the best way to safe-

guard a car from being stolen or vandalized, Station 12 community relations officer Cst. Adalbert Pimentel replied unhesitatingly, "Keep it inside the garage."

He went on to say that if the car's owner chooses to leave the vehicle on a parking pad in the front yard, "having a working camera is definitely a big plus. Because not only is it a deterrent, but you also get positive identification of how the crime was committed, and also of the suspect."

Just as "layers" of security can help to safeguard a home from break-ins, without

Strike, cont'd from p. 1

ment since the end of December 2019.

In a statement on the city website dated March 14, Mayor Christina Smith said that "In keeping with the procedures set out in the Labour Code, city council wishes to keep the discussions at the negotiating table and does not intend to negotiate publicly or in the media.

"Indeed, the parties are currently in a conciliation process. To that effect, a conciliator has been appointed by the Ministère du Travail and is actively participating in this process to renew the collective agreement... We hope this process can soon

guaranteeing 100-percent protection, a variety of anti-car theft measures can help dissuade thieves, he added, including a locking bar on the steering wheel.

He said on-board alarm systems with automatic engine cut-off when activated by a break-in are also useful.

"When it comes to crime prevention, it's a question of time," said Pimentel. "There are many things you can do. You're not building a fort, you're buying time. Because time is something that works against the criminal."

lead to the signing of an agreement between the two parties."

After two days of previous strike action February 7 and 8, the city and union had been back to the negotiating table February 10.

We welcome your letters

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.

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Westmount youth group profile

Cubs learn the buddy system, respecting people, being careful

By JENNIFER BALL

The *Independent* was introduced to some local Cubs at their weekly meet-up at Roslyn Elementary School and the young participants were eager to explain what the association with the group had offered them.

In Canada, the Scouting groups – now open to male and female participants – by age are:

- Beavers/Castors, ages 5 to 7,
- Cubs/Louveteaux, 8 to 10,
- Scouts, 11 to 14,
- Venturers/Aventuriers, 15 to 17,
- Rovers/Routiers 18 to 25,
- Scouters, 18+ (adult volunteers).

Nine-year-old Eamon O'Boyle was asked about the colourful badges on his shirt, which he sewed on by himself.

"At camp, you can earn them," he said, "and when you are invested [into Cubs], you get the 'necker,' as in neckerchief.

What skills has he gleaned from the effort that went into earning the badges? "That you have to respect everyone and you have to be careful in all sorts of ways," he replied.

"You do not want to hurt yourself. You do not want to be alone. They have something that is called the buddy system so if you want to go to the bathroom, you have to ask your buddy and they go with you so that you are not alone."

A 10-year-old, Ahinoam Pastor, was one of two girls at the meeting, although attendance was thin on the night in question, likely attributable to the fact that families had travel plans for March break.

Her take on the experience was "you have to respect rules and be organized."

Pastor is a fan of camping with the Cubs. "Camps are really cool and it is my favourite activity. Sometimes, we clean up the forest and sometimes we sell things for kids that want to come into Scouts, like fire-starters."



From left, Juliette Lewkiw, Ahinoam Pastor, Eamon O'Boyle, Ben Nutik and William Weymouth; sitting: Guillaume Yu; crouching: Oliver Durant and Alvin Chan at Roslyn School on March 1.

Nine-year-old Guillaume Yu believes that Cubs have put him in touch with his ability to connect with animals. He also learned how to "survive in the woods. How to make a fire."

Leadership is a skill that the group encourages and Yu is taking his mentorship duties seriously despite his tender age. "Mostly, I help the other students to get 'up,' ... and they are happier now."

Scout leader Virginia Elliott said that Scouting has evolved over the years.

"The Scouting movement, founded in 1907, provides a leadership program based

on experiencing new things, acquiring skills to protect and commune with nature, [and] learning how to work together locally and globally."

"Scout's honour" implies that one has the same honorable standards associated with Scouts and so will stand by a promise or tell the truth. Scouter (adult volunteer) Chris Hosein applied it by initiating discussions about Scouting's nadir.

A *Globe and Mail* article reported in 2012 that Scouts Canada has referred more than 100 allegations of historic sexual abuse to police after a forensic audit raised

troubling questions about the organization's handling of the cases over the past several decades. Scouts Canada chief commissioner Steve Kent told a news conference in Ottawa at the time that "we have decided to confront the good and the bad of our past."

The good that came out of it are enhanced safety protocols. "There always has to be two Scout leaders together in any interaction with a kid," Hossein said. And as Eamon said, your buddy is to be by your side, even during a comfort break.

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We are recruiting interested persons from all communities who would like to open their home to these children.

The ideal foster family would be that of a family that can make the commitment to accommodate a sibling group of three or four on a short-term basis or long-term basis.

For more information, please call Batshaw Youth and Family Centres at 514.932.7161, local 1139.

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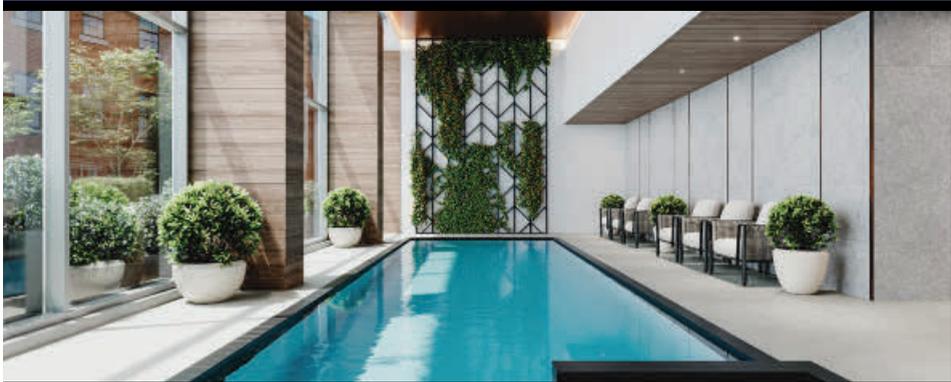
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9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

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You can see it in his eyes, poor little guy. He is looking forward to a loving family environment and you can make all the difference in the world to him.

Max is a very handsome white-and-black longhair with huge gold-tone eyes, quite striking in his unique markings. He is just four years old, very healthy, up to

That look says it all – please adopt Max



date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped.

For more information on Max, please refer to the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com, scroll to his information page from his identification number, 52239438, and take note of the new adoption visit program featuring opening hours at the shelter from 10 am every day. It is now possible to go by the SPCA at 5215 Jean Talon St. West to visit and meet the animals who are available for adoption.

Please come by for Max, he is waiting.
Your neighbour,
Lysanne



Westmount A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

Precious Zouzou was dropped off at the city shelter as her family was leaving the country. At 13 years of age, this sweet girlie has just been scooped up from the kennel by Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions and would be best in the heartwarming environment of a foster family as soon as possible.

A cute terrier who loves her days of cuddling and activities, she is a delight. She enjoys walkies and is housetrained to also use pee pads in the house.

She is companionable to small dogs but, being a terrier, cats are not a great idea. Being in a home with a fenced yard would be a good base for Zouzou for assessment moving forward. She is a bit chubby and, with regular diet and exercise, she will be in great shape in no time.

Zouzou is spayed, vaccinated, microchipped and just had a full dental. Please

Urgent – foster family for Zouzou

refer to the Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions website for more information on them at www.gerdysrescue.org and find out more about Zouzou and the foster family pro-

gram by writing to the volunteers at info@gerdysrescue.org.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne



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City Views

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Beating jet lag, with gardens



The “curtain” that is the Pitti Palace, behind which lies the Boboli Gardens.

In Florence, what lies beneath will probably remain unknown. But what lies behind is a lesson in discovery.

Often, a massive wooden door belies an incredible interior.

In some cases, an even more massive building acts as a curtain. Which leads me to the Pitti Palace, located in the Oltrarno (the less-touristy, southern side of the Arno River).

What lies behind

There, what lies behind is a theatre: the Boboli Gardens. Furthermore, another garden – the little-known Bardini – is linked to the Boboli and can be entered with the same admission ticket.

I always venture out for a long walk as the best way to beat jet lag. And what better path than through a garden or, in this case, two?

Originally designed for the Medici under the patronage of Eleanor of Toledo, wife of Duke Cosimo de' Medici, the Boboli Gardens opened to the public in 1766.

Overseen by architect/artist Giorgio Vasari, the elegantly planned space is a wonderland where you can stroll freely.

Take time. Note the grotto, the belvedere, the waterfall and rows of magnificent ancient and Renaissance statues amidst tree-lined *allées*.

Oh. And you'll be awed by the amphitheatre with its carefully calibrated perspective leading to a superb point of view.

Lemons, in a good way

And if one likes lemons (after all, limoncello is the second most-popular liqueur in Italy), seek out the many varieties, many of which have marvellous names: *citrus limon mellarosa*, *medica Florentina*, *aurantifolia Neapolitanum*.

Apart from constructed vistas, one can wander through less formal woods. There are also almost-hidden narrow footpaths to be followed amidst lush bushes. Sleek felines quickly dashed under protective foliage as I ventured along the shrouded passageways.

And then I reached the unassuming connecting “lane” to the Bardini Gardens. Listed as one of Florence’s “secret gardens,” it does indeed have many fewer travellers. (Hooray!) *continued on p. 14*



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Il Giardino Bardini.

City views cont'd from p. 13

Tranquility reigns.

Thankfully, there are no packs of tourists led by flag-waving guides. Once a private estate, the site only re-opened in 2005 after an extensive restoration that took five years and 12 million euros.

The original plan dates to the 13th century. Gardens are designed thematically. The Bardini botanical collection is famous. One can revel in the Anglo-Chinese garden, and step along the wonderful staircase uniting terraced flower beds and leading to the belvedere.

There, sip and wonder at the panorama of Florence.

As mentioned, one can enter the Bardini and Boboli gardens via the Pitti Palace to the west of the gardens. I always go to the Via de Bardi entrance, to the east. However you go, take time for these gardens of delights.

The Boboli's 111 acres invite more than one visit. The less crowded Bardini (10 acres) has ever-changing flower fields and a resplendent wisteria pergola as well as the Bardini Museum.

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