

SUPPLEMENT

The Origin Story – In chronological order

These pages should be read in conjunction with the editorial of November 26, p. 4. The numbering of the emails tracks editor David Price's November 16 Email #1 to Mayor Christina Smith.

Email #2 – February 2, 2023

Dear Christina,

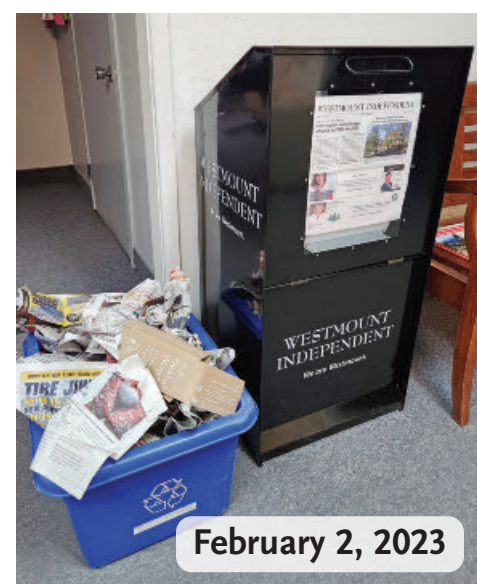
Thanks for calling.

As just discussed, here is the site at the foot of Roslyn steps, where Roslyn Ave. meets The Boulevard, and the dispensing box with a recycling box in the shot to show its size.

Best regards, David



February 1, 2023



February 2, 2023



February 10, 2023

Email #3 – February 10, 2023

Thanks! David

Email #4 – October 24, 2024

Dear Robert,

Thank you for help in February 2023 in agreeing to a place for our “test” newspaper box on the north side of The Boulevard at Roslyn/Upper Roslyn/the Roslyn steps. It has been there since then, without incident.

A new Canada Post strike is looming, which was our whole reason for having the box program in place, i.e. to serve the area above Sherbrooke during a strike and give residents places to pick up newspapers reasonably close to their houses.

Please find nine new proposed locations for the strike period. In all cases, I have tried to choose places near existing city structures (e.g. poles, garbage cans) and/or a post box, so as to be able to “tuck in” the box and keep it away from your sidewalk ploughs. I am, of course, open to suggestions and improvements.

1. Côte St. Antoine and Victoria, northwest corner,
2. Sunnyside and Upper Lansdowne, southeast corner,
3. Entrance to Summit Woods, near Oakland and Summit Circle,
4. The Boulevard and Aberdeen, southeast corner,
5. Montrose and Mt. Pleasant, northeast corner,
6. Entrance to Murray Park, near Montrose and Murray,
7. Entrance to Murray Park, near Westmount Ave. and Murray Hill,
8. [site not used],
9. Entrance to Queen Elizabeth Gardens, near Barat and Vignal.

Best regards,

David Price, editor

514-935-4537

[nine photos of these sites were included in a pdf]

Email #5 – November 14, 2024

Dear Robert,

The roll-out of the eight new newspaper boxes has gone well. They are in place and have been used for two weeks without incident. Thank you.

The first Canada Post strike day may be tomorrow and I have two boxes left. May I put them out on Sunnyside (south side, near the stairs leading down to Edgehill, picture 1) and near the Belmont Crescent entrance to Murray Park (picture 2)?

Thanks for taking a look and best regards, David

514-935-4537

[Two photos were included in this email]

Email #6 – November 15, 2024

On Fri, Nov 15, 2024 at 3:45 PM Talarico, Robert <[...]@westmount.org> wrote:

Dear Mr. Price,

I am writing to address an important matter concerning the newspaper mailboxes you installed at various locations within the city.

The installation of mailboxes does not comply with the city regulations. Additionally, as a city, we must maintain impartiality and cannot show favouritism towards any business over another. The installation of your mailboxes creates a precedent, which is not something the city can allow. This principle is essential to ensure fairness and equality within our community.

We kindly request that you remove all newspaper mailboxes before next Monday, November 18th.

We trust that you understand the importance of adhering to city regulations and appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Thank you for your understanding and swift attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert Talarico

Director of Public Works

Email A – November 15, 2024

Dear Christina,

Does the email ... [above from Robert Talarico on November 15, Email #6] in fact represent the city's view?

Best regards, David

Email B – November 16, 2024

Good morning David,

Council has not discussed this issue, I can raise it with them on Monday.

Did you discuss with PW where you were putting the boxes before putting them out? I understand there is some concern with the one placed at Summit Woods in particular.

Director Talarico is correct though in that there is a bylaw in place and what he allows for one company he would then need to allow for others such as the Suburban.

I can empathize that the strike possibility poses a problem for your distribution.

I would recommend you speak with Mr. Talarico to find a solution to your strike issue.

CS [Christina Smith]

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Email #1 – November 16, 2024

letter to Mayor Christina Smith

Dear Christina,

Thank you for the quick reply [to my short email of Friday, November 15 – email A], and on a Saturday morning.

Unfortunately, there will likely be more back-and-forth this weekend, but it is not my doing. Your director of Public Works, Robert Talarico, after a year-and-a-half of city acquiescence, including his own involvement (see below), attempted to rescind permission for our newspaper boxes on city land, on a Friday afternoon at 3:25 pm, on the first day of the feared and planned-for postal strike, with a deadline leaving us two weekend days to react. This behaviour is not reasonable in the private sphere, and much less so for a democratic government dealing with the press as it attempts to survive a strike by an external contractor (i.e. not of our own doing).

The time-fuse lit by Robert also means that I must make final plans for the coming week in light of these events on Monday morning. I don't have more time to plan than that, to repeat, because of his schedule.

Furthermore, we relied on the city's good faith and acquiescence over this long period and so did not come up with an alternate plan. I cannot come up with a “Plan C” in days, or even weeks. Robert's

SUPPLEMENT

last-minute about-face is not acceptable.

To answer your question and the ones implied by it:

1. I first brought this plan up with you in February 2023, explaining our need for a back-up plan during a postal strike. I sent you a picture of one of our boxes and the proposed first site (email #2 – February 2, 2023) to enable you to make internal inquiries,
2. You checked with Robert and then told me that the test location, to go into effect immediately, was acceptable. That location, like all the others, was deliberately chosen so as not to interfere with city operations, most notably sidewalk ploughs (if any minor adjustments are ever necessary, just tell me),
3. I sent you a picture of the test newspaper box in place at The Boulevard (north side) and the Upper Roslyn steps (February 10, 2023, email #3). It has been there ever since, without incident,
4. When this particular postal strike became more likely, I reached out to Robert to clear nine new specific locations via email #4 (October 24, 2024). I then called him on October 28 to follow up and he said that they were fine, which is why my Distribution Note in our paper of October 29, p. 4 reads the way that it does.

After our call, he called me back right away to confirm that the placement of the new boxes was for the strike period only, and I confirmed that.

5. Two and a half weeks later, I asked about two more sites in order to fully deploy our 11 boxes (email #5, November 14, 2024). He wrote me back the next day demanding that I remove them all (email #6, November 15, 2024).

In my view, the city has agreed to these boxes and should honour its word.

Additionally, the city is not a sole proprietorship, or a club, or a public or private company, or even a charity. It is a democratic government. What do you think the voters of Westmount want? Do they want their local paper to survive? We did not arrive in town yesterday and ask to put up a cigarette stand on Westmount Ave. We are a very well regarded local media outlet asking for accommodation (a few feet of land) during a strike, which we asked for in good time and transparently.

Furthermore, our readers and advertisers have now been apprised, repeatedly, over three issues and person-to-person communication, of these efforts on their behalf.

Any comparison with any other newspaper is a red herring. We are the only newspaper that focuses only on Westmount and that distributes only in Westmount, and have been since 2015. Please do not use the ploy used by the Legal department on the real estate transfers issue and act as though a request from us is an out-of-the-blue one, or one of millions by strange and unfamiliar entities. The city knows who we are, and knows how little we are asking, and has known for a year and a half.

For all of these reasons, I close with this: chief elected officer Christina, with city council support if required, please direct the municipal civil servants to honour the permission already granted by the city for the duration of this strike.

Best regards,

David Price, editor
Westmount Independent
weekly newspaper

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Email C – November 18, 2024

Hello David,

We have reviewed the email exchanges regarding the newspaper boxes, understand the context surrounding their installation and appreciate your efforts to provide continued access to your publication during the ongoing postal strike.

It has been decided to allow the boxes to remain in place until the end of the strike, with the exception of those at Summit Woods, that would need to be removed immediately.

Once the strike concludes, we kindly request that all newspaper boxes be removed.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Julie [Mandeville, city director general]

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Email D – November 18, 2024

Hi, Julie,

Thank you for this news. What is wrong with the one at Summit Woods? Can it be moved slightly?

Best regards, David

Editor's note: November 24, 2024: the Summit Woods box is still there. No reply yet to this email. Was the city's objection to this box arbitrary? – DP.