

**\$137M operating budget adopted for 2025, but...**

## City faces 'staggering' expenses in future

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

An operating budget of \$137 million for 2025 was presented at a special city council meeting December 16, resulting in a reported tax hike of \$43 a month for the average single-family home. This was stated as an increase of 3.15 percent, compared to 4.55 percent 2024, and the lowest in four years.

The impact, however, came with a dire warning for the future from Councillor Conrad Peart of the need to change the

city's long-standing pay-as-you-go (PAYG) policy of funding major works projects from the operating budget to one based on gradual increases to deal with "dwindling surpluses" and "years of underinvestment."

### Pay-as-you-go to go?

The PAYG approach, he said as commissioner of infrastructure, "is no longer sufficient to meet the scale of our current infrastructure needs." To fully fund such capital works requirements without borrowing would require a tax increase of 23 percent "that simply is not tenable."

These future infrastructure needs are "staggering," added Mayor Christina Smith. They include restoration of roads, sidewalks, *continued on p. 8*

**Westmount Park United's Reverend Neil Whitehouse moves on, see p. 14**

## RMR starts year with levée, 'Moose Milk'



From left, retired Canadian Forces sergeant Nick Karkasoulis, former RMR commanding officer Henry Hall and bartender retired captain Georges Gohier are seen sampling Moose Milk at the St. Catherine St. armoury on New Year's Day. See p. 6 for story and recipe. PHOTO: MARTIN C. BARRY.

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### Big blue bins

## What's been delivered, what they do and how to return them

BY JENNIFER BALL

Mugisha Rutishisha, director of the Communications department at the city, told the *Independent* January 6 that a total of 2,250 of the new big blue recycling bins, with wheels, have been delivered so far to residents. About 365 detached and semi-detached homes opted out of the delivery, he added.

There is more than just plastic being delivered.

A Montrose Ave. resident told the *Independent* that the wheeled blue bins have a "chip" in them that identify them as belonging to a specific home. Rutishisha refuted this, explaining that it is a serial number and not a chip.

He said, "The modernization of the selec- *continued on p. 4*



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*Jury for merchants' competition speaks:*

# Best holiday windows came from La Cache/April Cornell and Hogg



BY LAUREN SWEENEY

Winners in the commercial districts' holiday window competition were Hogg Hardware for Victoria village and La Cache/April Cornell for Quartier Greene. The contest took place for the first time this year and was promoted by the merchants' respective associations.

Organized by the associations' general manager Cynthia Lulham, the competition was sponsored by the *Westmount Independent*, which offered half-page advertisements (see story November 26, p. 11).

"We were very pleased with the participation levels in both commercial sectors, in particular the restaurants and service businesses who don't normally have dis-

play windows. Thank you to all who participated, our commercial areas looked very festive and inviting. We look forward to the new holiday street decorations promised in the city budget for next year."

She said that two residents as judges visited Victoria village on December 4 and Quartier Greene on December 5. Results

LEFT PHOTO COURTESY OF CYNTHIA LULHAM; RIGHT PHOTO: LAUREN SWEENEY.

were based on four criteria: creativity, originality, attractiveness and appeal.

Along with the winners, honourable mentions were awarded in Vic village to Alain Assedo and Les Petits Voyous while two in Quartier Greene went to MediSpa and Boutique Surprise.

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## Police Report

# \$100,000 jewellery heist and attempted break-ins over the holidays

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Police at Station 12 on Stanton St. are pursuing investigations following two attempted household break-ins in late December, as well as a burglary in early January during which an estimated \$100,000 worth of jewellery was stolen.

### 'Spiderman' attempts balcony entry

On December 28, a tenant in an apartment building at the corner of Lansdowne Ave. and de Maisonneuve Blvd. reported to the police an incident during which a suspect jumped onto his outdoor balcony and attempted to open the locked door.

According to Station 12 community relations officer Cst. Mike Yigit, the tenant called 9-1-1. At about the same time, the suspect became aware he had been spotted, jumped off the balcony onto the roof of a parked car and ran off.

In a statement given later to the police, the tenant said it wasn't the first time there was a break-in attempt in the area.

He said that a few weeks earlier, a tenant in a neighbouring apartment had been broken into and burglarized. As such, the police theorize it may all be the work of a single suspect.

### Trespassers flee from work site

On December 29, a male and female suspect who were spotted by security cameras as they were about to trespass onto the de Maisonneuve Blvd. site of a building undergoing renovations fled just as police were arriving.

The security cameras captured images of the suspects, one of whom was wearing a backpack, while both had head coverings.

"They jumped the fence and were arriving outside the building," said Yigit. "But we believe they were probably disturbed

when they saw the police officers arrive and they ran off."

According to a report on the incident submitted by the responding officers, the suspects left footprints in the snow leading towards the building's front door, with additional footprints leading off the site in another direction.

Nothing was reported as having been stolen nor were there any damages.

### Jewellery stolen in southeast Westmount

Finally, an estimated \$100,000 worth of jewellery was stolen during a burglary on January 3 at a house in southeast Westmount.

According to the incident summary, a neighbour called the police to report that the patio door on the house next to hers was broken open.

Officers arriving on the scene confirmed the door had been smashed in, while inside they found a half-open and empty jewellery box lying on the floor.

"It looks like they may have been just after the jewellery, or they had just enough time to take it," said Yigit, noting the value was based on a declaration by the owners.

Given the elevated value of the stolen property, a Montreal police department's special crimes unit is working on the investigation and crime scene fingerprint identification specialists are also involved.

### Mod's to be back soon

Le Salon Mods at Greene and St. Catherine has had black coverings on all the windows for quite a while, and no sign on the door. Apparently, it is undergoing renovations and will reopen January 16. – VR.



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**Blue bins** *cont'd from p. 1*

tive collection system is a provincial initiative led by Éco Entreprises Québec (ÉEQ) aimed at improving the efficiency and quality of sorting recyclable materials. One of the measures implemented as part of this initiative is the standardization of 360-litre blue recycling bins...

“The province’s new bins, supplied by ÉEQ and free of charge to cities, are equipped with radio frequency identification (RFID) tags. This system uses intelligent barcodes to identify items and transmit data. These tags are typically used for ‘pay as you throw’ intelligent collection systems...

“Westmount’s new bins have these tags, but they are inactive, as the city does not use this ‘pay as you throw’ collection program. The serial number on each bin is only linked to a specific address.”

**Bin blues**

One of the new bins was delivered to a Westmount resident by December 5 who had opted out of receiving it and its pickup, they were told, could occur anywhere between January 7 and January 24.

Rutishisha was invited to explain why this would have happened.

On January 6, he said, “A letter was first distributed to every detached and semi-detached residence with an initial opt-out date of September 27. A second communication was then done with a revised deadline of October 18. Multiple communications were done again before and during the delivery asking residents to contact us as soon as possible.”

The resident told *the Independent* that she was on site when the bin’s distributor dropped off the bin and she asked them to take it back, which they refused to do.

Rutishisha explained that would have

occurred because “the distributor’s mandate was to deliver bins to all the addresses provided by the city. Some people opted out at the last minute, and their addresses couldn’t be transmitted to the contractor in time. The city is responsible for collecting the unwanted bins.”

The de Casson resident shared a January 6 email that she had received from the Environment group in Public Works supporting her belief that she had not opted out at the last minute.

The email read “...Indeed, you seem to have received [the wheeled 360-litre blue bin] by mistake...We will come pick up your bin as soon as possible, anytime between [January 7] and within the next couple of weeks. As such, please make sure to keep the bin visible and accessible from the street but not curbside as of [January 7] ...We apologize for the inconveniences.”

**Anyone can return a bin**

Currently, residents who opted out and received a bin – and those who didn’t opt out and received a bin they don’t want – can still contact the Public Works’ waste management team by filling out the form on the citizen portal via [westmount.org/recycling](http://westmount.org/recycling).

Rutishisha said “After contacting the city, the resident will be asked to move the unwanted bin to a location on their property where it will remain visible from the street and easily accessible...”

“The bin must not be left on streetside as this may confuse collection employees and lead them to believe it requires emptying. The city will collect unwanted bins and redistribute them to residents who have requested a new bin. Unwanted bins will be collected within seven business days (weather permitting).”

## Public Security also thanks volunteers

# Donations help food drive feed record 46 families

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

It was a record-breaking food drive from Public Security this year, resulting in 46 families receiving holiday hampers of non-perishable food, toiletries, and specially required items, turkeys and hams purchased from cash donations. It was reported



Public safety officer Julie Noiret with volunteer Vivien Chai. PHOTO COURTESY OF PUBLIC SECURITY.

to be the most successful holiday drive since at least 2010.

“I’d like to thank Vivien Chai and her daughter Fiona for all their amazing help sorting food and putting together food baskets again this year,” said Public Security’s assistant director Kimberley Colquhoun, the organizer.

She also said that students from École internationale on Côte St. Antoine near Clarke collected children’s books and donated them to the drive.

“I was honestly worried about the amount of food collected as it seemed to be less once sorted in our ‘courtroom’ [at the Public Security station on Stanton],” Colquhoun said. “When we received the donations from the Westmount Lawn Bowling and Croquet Club (see p. 5), 215 Redfern, Justin McManus Hockey, it really helped to put the final touches on the family baskets and made sure they were getting a good amount of non-perishables.”

As previously reported, the drive opened with \$1,515 from admissions to the Artisans’ Festival (see story November 19, p. 8) and raised another \$1,720 from stands outside Metro and Les 5 Saisons (see story December 10, p. 14) along with city employee events and other city activities.

**Just like at parking meters**

## Parking permission to be associated with licence plate

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

There are no changes planned for parking regulations this year, Public Security officials told the *Independent* January 8.

Rather, a change that concerned some Victoria village residents last week applies only to how officers and parking inspectors will more easily monitor the permit situation. “This is simply by scanning a licence plate as they do now regarding parking meters,” said assistant Public Security director Kimberley Colquhoun. “The parking permission will be associated with the licence plate.”

In response to these concerns, a statement was also issued by the mayor’s office January 8 confirming that “The only change in respect to parking permits is that parking rights (red permit, green permit...) will be associated with the resident’s plate number rather than the number on a sticker.

“Stickers will continue to be issued as

we are still in a test phase.

“The 24-hr enforcement for red stickers will not change. Once the city has a launch date, the Communications department will inform residents through the proper channels.”



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A bin-delivery truck in action, as seen December 3 on Kitchener Ave.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

## Lawn bowlers support Public Security's food drive



Shown at the clubhouse, Naomi Sharpe and Izak Rubin spearheaded the fifth annual food drive collected from the Westmount Lawn Bowling and Croquet Club as its annual contribution to Public Security's Christmas food drive (see story at left). This included \$455, according to president Brian Lambert.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF B. LAMBERT.



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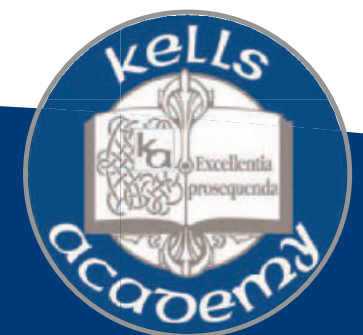
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## Noah Fox hockey player for November

# Leadership & hard work leads to recognition

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

“Determination and hard work with his M13-B team,” has earned Noah Fox recognition from the Westmount Minor Hockey Association as hockey player of the month for November. This honour was announced last week after hockey resumed at the rinks of the Westmount recreation centre after installation in December of a new cooling tower.

According to sports co-ordinator Gabrielle Jay-Riendeau, Noah has been playing in Westmount since age 5 in 2019 and is “well involved in the hockey community. He volunteers as a coach for the under age 7 teams and is currently working toward his referee certification.”

He also plays baseball and soccer in Westmount.

“Noah is a hardworking and detail-oriented player,” explains his coach, Mark-Olivier McNulty. “He has offensive skills, but what makes him stand out is his great sense of positioning and defensive mind. He anticipates well.”

Described as a natural leader, “his teammates look up to him as he preaches by example.”

Noah is also being compared to NHL player Jake Evans of the Montreal Canadiens for “hard work, solid defence and being a detail-oriented leader.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT SPORTS AND RECREATION.

## ‘Moose Milk’ was on the menu at RMR on New Year’s Day

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Guests of the Royal Montreal Regiment greeted the New Year on January 1 while being served breakfast prepared by the regimental sergeant major, after which they enjoyed a distinctively Canadian alcoholic beverage known as Moose Milk.

Associated especially with celebrations organized by the Canadian Armed Forces, Moose Milk has been served as long as anyone can remember at the beginning of every year at the Governor General’s New Year’s Day Levée in Ottawa.

The *levée* is a longstanding tradition in the Canadian Armed Forces as one of the activities associated with New Year’s Day. In years past, military commanders garrisoned throughout the vast expanse of Canada held local *levées* since, as commissioned officers, they were expected to act on behalf of the crown on such occasions.

According to a recipe published online

by the RMR a few years back, the traditional RMR Moose Milk recipe is:

- Dark rum – 40 oz (1.18 litres),
- Vodka – 20 oz (600 ml),
- Kahlúa – 20 oz (600 ml),
- Disaronno – 20 oz (600 ml),
- Egg nog – 4 litres,
- Vanilla ice cream – 4 litres,
- Nutmeg & cinnamon to taste.

Retired Canadian Armed Forces captain Georges Gohier, a Westmount resident, doesn’t usually tend bar, although he was delegated to mix up the RMR’s Moose Milk on New Year’s Day.

“I’m doing this on a hope and a prayer,” he said, noting it was the second year he’d been assigned the task.

Although he was unable to be there in person, RMR commanding officer Lieutenant-Colonel Maciej Jonasz delivered an address over speakerphone, welcoming everyone and wishing them all the best for the new year. *See photo on p. 1.*

# Event helps many proclaim ‘I Challenge Diabetes’



## Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

I Challenge Diabetes (ICD) recently held a merry evening at the Riverside in St. Henri. The goal was to fund programs for diabetics to help build strength and confidence. ICD was founded by former Olympic rower and gold medallist **Chris Jarvis**, who has been a Type 1 diabetic for 30 years.

He was part of the ICD event committee, which included **Tracy DiMarco**, **Julia Pesek**, **Imran Nathani** and event planner **Alex Cooper**, “a diabetic for 2.5 years.”

VIP guest was **Anne Royer**, who was diagnosed as diabetic in 1976 when she was 15 years old.

Attending with her son **Andrew Rankan**, for the fun eve, Anne wore her Go Girl Garter to carry her pump.

Twenty-two diabetics attended. Praise was unanimous for the Dilallo food truck. One of the night’s hit moments was the silent auction, where tickets to the Billie Eilish concert in Quebec City inspired



Anne Royer and Andrew Rankan.



ICD team: Tracy DiMarco, Julia Pesek, Alex Cooper, Chris Jarvis and Imran Nathani.

kept bidding for a final of \$1,200, which included a stay at the St. Antoine hotel.

DJ Tali Rose ensured that all danced a

fabulous finale. Sponsors included: Dex4, Checkpoint, Morris & Rosalind Goodman Foundation, Olymbec, Saint-Jean Hyundai,

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## Historic 'Metcalfe Terrace' house at 168 Côte St. Antoine

# Painting of Wardleworth House restored, exhibited at The Gallery

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

An oil painting of one of Westmount's oldest houses – the landmark yellow home at 168 Côte St. Antoine at the foot of Forde built around 1840 – was discovered a year ago by the Westmount Historical Association (WHA). Restored, it was unveiled at a gathering December 18 at Victoria Hall's Gallery.

The home, which came to be known as the Wardleworth House, is one of the two that remain of four built as Metcalfe Terrace – the other being the Goode House at number 178.

### Other times, other uses

These have been described as having occasionally billeted military officers and used occasionally as a stop-over in poor weather for at least one governor's carriage as he travelled up the muddy Côte St. Antoine from his office at the Château de Ramezay to his residence at Monklands (now Villa Maria).

According to the federal government's website on Monklands, three governors of the United Province of Canada lived there: Governor General Sir Charles Metcalfe

(1843-1845), Governor General Lord Cathcart (1846-1847) and Governor General Lord Elgin (1847-1854). It had been built in 1803 for Chief Justice James Monk.

The painting of the Wardleworth House was discovered by coincidence by Patrick Martin, a former city councillor, when he was part of a WHA group invited by the Canadian Heritage of Quebec (CHQ) to visit a warehouse and take what it might find of interest, explained WHA vice-president Caroline Breslaw.

### A Hingston painting

Both the painting and its frame were in desperate need of cleaning and restoration and were taken to Campbell Framing on Sherbrooke near Prince Albert where Glenn Campbell immediately recognized the work of the late Westmount artist Lillian Hingston (1881-1967).

Once restored, the painting was exhibited at The Gallery December 18 and re-located to the WHA offices and archives in Victoria Hall.

The house, which is now owned by Canadian Heritage of Quebec, is to be featured in the WHA's February newsletter, Breslaw said.



Painting of landmark Wardleworth House at a gathering December 18 at The Gallery. From left are Westmount Historical Association president Louise Carpentier; Patrick Martin, who discovered the painting and vice-president Caroline Breslaw. It now resides at the WHA archives.

### Budget, cont'd from p. 1

sewers, water and hydro lines.

On the other hand, Peart suggested, "We have an opportunity to expand our tax base through new development in the southeast sector" to provide a much-needed boost to city revenues. This project is in the public consultation process (see story November 26, p. 1).

The warning was addressed to the incoming council in November 2025, for which no election candidates have yet been announced.

### Lowest budget increase

The city's 2025 operating budget of

\$137.02 million was presented at the budget meeting by Councillor Jeff Shamie, chair of the Finance and Administration Committee.

Finance commissioner Councillor Antonio D'Amico was described as being away.

It is 1.6 percent higher than the budget for 2024, which had been 4.1 percent higher than the previous year.

### Local portion

The budget calls for local expenditures of \$69,732,000 offset by a surplus appropriation of \$5,541,000 to \$64,191,000 to cover the city's own costs.

### Agglo portion

Added to this, however, is the city's share (*quote-part*) of \$71,744,700 to the Montreal agglomeration council for such island-wide services as police, fire and transit, plus another \$1,080,600 to the Montreal Metropolitan Community, all for total expenditures of \$137,016,300.

This compares with \$134,893,700 in 2024 for an overall total increase of \$1.6 percent.

A complete breakdown of revenues and expenditures can be found on the city's website under 2025 operating budget.

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9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

## Harley Quinn

ren – she is participating; if someone is greeting arrivals at the door – she is on reception duties!

Sweet Harley Quinn is very healthy, up to date with her inoculations, spayed and microchipped. If you would like to find out more about her, please refer to the rescue's website at [www.gerdysrescue.org](http://www.gerdysrescue.org) and fill out the adoption-information form presented as a link. Once you have provided this contact information, volunteers will be in a position to get back to you to discuss your interest and adoption framework.

Do not hesitate, Harley Quinn is a darling. She is quite clever and delightful, never missing an opportunity to be friendly and affectionate with everyone.

Your neighbour,  
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A young mother cat brought in from the cold with her tiny kittens, it is now Harley Quinn's turn to be presented for adoption in a forever family.

She has become a social butterfly in foster care for the animal-rescue volunteer group Gerdy's Rescue & Adoptions. A most loving young beauty, Harley Quinn is a real companion to all in her present foster family: adults, children, dogs.

She is always ready to join in. If someone is doing dishes in the kitchen – she is there; if someone is relaxing and lounging – she is up for close, relaxed cuddles; if someone is playing games with the child-



Westmount  
A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

## Delightful Sophie



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If you would like more information on her, please enquire through the rescue's website at [www.gerdysrescue.org](http://www.gerdysrescue.org) and fill out its online linked adoption-information questionnaire to enquire about her.

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Your neighbour, Lysanne



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**BON RETIREMENT,  
DR. DUDKIEWICZ**

The teeth of the Stein family (including the late, departed baby teeth; some wisdom teeth and others) will deeply miss their favourite dentist, Dr. Aaron Dudkiewicz, who retired recently after decades of drilling, filling, yanking, scraping, poking, and providing all the best love and care a mouth could ask for. We all cherish the many years – at least a century and a half combined – of being your patients.

We will always remember your calm, reassuring and cheerful presence, and your counting skills that made us forget about the needle. While nobody can honestly say they ever looked forward to dentist appointments, you made it as close as it gets.

Being that this is possibly the official newspaper of the waiting room (though we were never kept long), we thought it would be a good place to wish you, Dr. Dudkiewicz, only joy and peace in this new chapter of your life.

With one last *aaaahhhhhh*,

THE STEIN FAMILY (MEIER & FAYE,  
BATSHEVA, RAPHI, MICHAEL, SHOSHANA,  
AY, ESTHER), CÔTE DES NEIGES-NDG

**PLAN FOR SOUTHEAST REFLECTS  
ATTENDEES, GOOD FOR FAMILIES**

*Open letter re: "Remember Atwater Library landmark during southeast planning"*

I was surprised and disappointed by the Atwater Library and Computer Centre's

open letter regarding the re-development of southeast Westmount that was published in the December 10 issue of the *Westmount Independent* (p. 5).

I was at the consultation held last month at Victoria Hall. I joined a breakout group where several long-time residents expressed concern about shade being cast into their backyards. I shared that the housing crisis has caused middle-class families like mine to give up on the idea of having a backyard (even a shady one!), that our collective inability to build housing is the major contributor to the crisis.

In the end, our group agreed that concerns about and shade needed to be balanced with the desperate need to construct new housing, and that additional density beyond 25 storeys could be accommodated on St. Catherine St.

The concerns raised in the December 10 letter are quite vague, they come after residents have already taken the time to participate in a very collaborative consultation process, and they do not include any specific suggestions or compromises that acknowledge or allow the need to new-construct housing near transit. While the concerns may be valid, they are not actionable and must be weighed against other concerns.

Middle-class families have given up on homeownership. My family is still grateful to have a good apartment in a wonderful neighbourhood. When I pass through Atwater/St. Catherine area, I am reminded

this is not the case for everyone. Our elected officials will need to balance concerns.

Heritage should be protected as much as possible, but the inability to build sufficient housing has created a societal crisis that can no longer be ignored. Addressing this crisis must be a top priority.

The city of Westmount should increase the proposed density on St. Catherine St., and must not allow the poorly timed December 10 letter limit or hinder this much-needed development.

JAMES MURPHY, MELVILLE AVE.

**Mayor Smith replies:** Thank you for your email and for your feedback. I am pleased to know that you participated with many others in the public consultations that took place for this very important project for the city. I hope that you have taken the time to also share your comments here: engage.westmount.org/en/project/westmount-southeast/

I appreciate your feedback on the current state of housing in the city and, indeed, in this country. It is important to remember that heritage buildings like the Atwater Library are protected and I was pleased that they were part of the stakeholder outreach. The area has not had any projects in decades, so we have an obligation to look at this with experts and consult residents in order to establish a vision for today's needs and the future of our city.

SINCERELY, CHRISTINA

**ATWATER LIBRARY SHOULD  
BE IMPORTANT PART OF  
SOUTHEAST PROCESS**

James Murphy's open letter to the *Independent's* editor (above) missed the point of the Atwater Library's open letter (December 10, p. 5) expressing concerns with Westmount's/Lemay's current vision for the southeast sector's re-development. The Atwater Library's leadership is not opposed to "densification," improved housing availability, nor re-development, but rather to the facile assumption (shared by Mr. Murphy) that somehow building higher is the best way to "densify" our sector without compromising the library's community value.

In a recent op-ed in the *Montreal Gazette* (December 16), former Westmount mayors Peter Trent and Karin Marks, plus Julia Gersovitz and other distinguished architects, eloquently outlined their informed concerns about the current planning for the southeast sector, and urged a creative alternative, both in scale and vision, for the area's densification.

Our letter was direct, and neither "vague" nor "poorly timed," as it followed

hard upon the latest iteration of the Lemay proposals provided publicly by the city only in late November.

Like Mr. Murphy, the Atwater Library's representatives participated in both public consultations, but were dismayed to see that our building was not included in the Lemay planning, nor highlighted as an important asset that already contributes to the life and vitality of the sector. We were assured by city representatives that the second public consultation was part of an ongoing planning process, and thus the Atwater Library continues to seek a key role in helping shape a revived southeast sector that recognizes our important position as a "third space" in the neighbourhood while respecting density objectives.

To quote Mr. Murphy, "Heritage should be protected as much as possible." The Atwater Library's leadership agrees, but does not agree with his simplistic conclusion that "additional density beyond 25 storeys" along St. Catherine St. is a good solution, either to his concerns or ours.

GEOFFREY DOWD, VICE-PRESIDENT,  
ATWATER LIBRARY AND  
COMPUTER CENTRE

**SPEECHLESS, ALARMED AT  
SOUTHEAST PLANNING**

I attended the second public consultation meeting of Imagine Westmount Southeast on November 14, however I did not share any comments during the breakout session, because I was so taken aback and stunned from what was presented that I was speechless. What I witnessed at this session was a waste of taxpayers' money.

The professionals did not properly guide the public through a more instructive architectural and urban design process. Some of the residents who, at seeing what was presented to them, very justly recoiled, and expressed their wish that nothing at all be built in front of their beautiful turn-of-the-century greystone homes on Dorchester.

In my opinion, a clear mission statement and vision should have been outlined from the start of the process. Something like "Creating a Manhattan-like, Park Avenue quality neighbourhood" should have been the very start of the process, rather than surrender to NIMBY pressure groups that have no understanding of urban design.

Aesthetically pleasing modern midrise residential buildings would have been easily accepted if they were presented in a more coherent, organized and contextual vision and concept, with a hierarchy of spaces and a well-groomed skyline.

Instead, only a speck of residential buildings on Dorchester is being proposed,

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

the urban façade remains discontinuous and a hodge-podge of incompatible uses litter an unorganized plan.

The proposal for an interior swimming pool will only bring more unnecessary vehicular and pedestrian traffic completely incompatible with this area. In front of the pool, another square (and possibly skate park) is being proposed, adjacent to one of Montreal's largest squares, Cabot Square, which already has a questionable reputation.

The proposed commercial buildings on St. Catherine St. do not make any sense. The spacing between the towers render the floor plates too small and not commercially viable. We were told that the spacing was created to highlight the continuity of street corridors. However, no one will appreciate the proposed spacing between the building towers at that height above street level.

The proposal also suggests that Dorchester at St. Catherine and Clarke be completely blocked off to through traffic. Instead, another park would be created, with an exit street for local residents. Why was a study not undertaken? It would have shown – among many things – that the lanes in that area are already congested, particularly during snow season. Furthermore, this busy road, which the proposal plans to eradicate, is used by many Westmounters and constitutes one of the most important entry gates into the city. You really don't even need to commission a traffic study to understand this obvious fact.

I designed McGill College Ave. in 1984, among other projects, so I understand the importance of the urban fabric, which requires a delicate balance between aesthetics, quality of life, symbolism and economy.

As a fellow Westmouter, I feel compelled to sound the alarm and express my concern. This plan requires a complete overhaul.

I invite my neighbours to see for them-

selves. Please investigate this plan and make your concerns known so that together, we can suggest pivotal changes. Go to [engage.westmount.org/en/project/westmount-southeast/](http://engage.westmount.org/en/project/westmount-southeast/)

MIGUEL ESCOBAR, ARCHITECT & URBAN PLANNER, GROSVENOR AVE.

### LAX MANAGEMENT COMPROMISES OUR VALUES AND SAFETY

I would like to share with the citizens of Westmount an incident that occurred on December 25 that highlights a concerning issue in the management of our city. At 11:35 am that day, I observed a vehicle parked on Summit Circle in an area where parking is prohibited at all times.

As a citizen concerned with public order, I immediately reported the violation to Public Security. After several minutes without any intervention, I contacted the dispatch centre again. The dispatcher informed me that the officer on duty had decided to "give a gift" to the offender and not issue a ticket, claiming that the officer had passed by the location.

However, I want to emphasize that I was present on site at all times and did not see any Public Security officer or patroller. I called Public Security again. The dispatcher then told me that there was no need for me to remain on site and that I could leave.

In light of this response, my confusion is complete. How can Public Security reward an individual violating the rules in this manner? Offering a "gift" to an offender instead of issuing a ticket is unacceptable. It is neither fair nor equitable, and it undermines the credibility of our security system.

This incident raises serious questions about the enforcement of laws in Westmount, and highlights several worrying issues:

- Unacceptable laxity: Allowing violations without consequences undermines the credibility of the rules and encourages

non-compliance.

- A culture of [potential] favoritism: Who decides what deserves a punishment or a "gift"? This arbitrary decision raises issues of transparency and equality before the law.

As citizens, we have the right to expect exemplary management from our local authorities, who apply the regulations strictly and fairly.

This incident, although seemingly minor, reflects a concerning drift in the governance of our city and in the role of Public Security in Westmount.

Madam mayor, this situation directly calls your attention. How do you justify this leniency? Is it a directive from your administration to turn a blind eye to certain violations, especially for those using Summit Woods as a dog park or dog exercise area? Is this yet another privilege granted to dog walkers in Summit Woods by you, your administration, and Public Security under your governance, to the detriment of the safety of other residents in Westmount and the neighbourhoods surrounding Summit Woods?

I ask for a clear response and concrete measures to ensure that this type of situation does not happen again. We deserve

a governance that applies the rules rigorously, fairly, and ensures the safety and well-being of all citizens.

I thank the *Westmount Independent* for providing this space to express a concern that I know is shared by many citizens of our community.

MARYAM KAMALI NEZHAD,  
SUMMIT CIRCLE

### PRAISING PRICE, PONDERING PRESENCE OF POST-PEREGRINATION POUNDS

Editor David Price certainly deserves praise for weathering the cold and the postal strike by personally assuring that [as many residents as possible] received their *Indie*. It was greatly appreciated. To his advertisers, we can truly say: "He delivers!"

I look forward to hearing if Price lost weight during his peregrinations. I recall losing eight pounds going door to door while running for council. But then perhaps I needed to shed a few more than did Price.

PATRICK MARTIN, THE BOULEVARD

*Editor's reply:* Did I lose weight? Not a single pound. Is there no justice in this world? – DP.

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# Lambert hosts *salon/soirée* for Montreal Chamber Music Festival



## Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Phyllis Lambert recently hosted a *salon-style soirée* starring world renowned musicians **Denis Brott** (cellist) and young award-winning violinists **Sirena Huang** and **Kevin Zhu**.

The intimate concert featured a range of chamber music, including pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, Jean-Marie Leclair,



Ingrid Stefancic, Louis Seguin, Liève Perneel and André Poulin.

Giovanni Battista Viotti and the 20th century composer Nathan Milstein.

The elegant eve was a fundraiser for the Montreal Chamber Music Festival June 7-22, 2025. Established in 1995 by Denis Brott, who is artistic director, the festival enjoys an international reputation as one of the finest of its kind.

Its mandate is to encourage the most promising emerging talent, present great

artists and democratize chamber music.

Among guests enjoying the cocktail *dînatoire* before the performance were festival board president **Francis Malka**, secretary **Marc Roy** and treasurer **Jill de Villafranca**, as well as **Michèle Marchand**, **André Poulin** and his wife **Liève Perneel**, **Sylvie Demers** and **Pierre Desrochers**, **Ingrid Stefancic**, **Louis Séguin** and **Jane Skoryna**.



Denis Brott, Phyllis Lambert, Sirena Huang and Kevin Zhu.

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# After a decade of leadership, Rev. Whitehouse leaves Westmount Park United to pursue book-writing

BY JENNIFER BALL

Reverend Neil Whitehouse has delivered his last sermon at Westmount Park United Church.

He has served as minister since 2015 at the church, which is located at 4695 de Maisonneuve Blvd. (corner Lansdowne), and on January 12 he delivered his last message to his congregation: one of hope, meaning and encouragement to never to despair.

“I’m calling my moving-on a ‘re-purposing’ rather than a ‘retirement’ because I’m not retracting from life,” he told *the Independent* on January 9.

His last service was, in his words, “A fairly standard service, which celebrated the baptism of Jesus because the sacred calendar has been something that I have maintained for the church during my ministry.”

His progressive, but traditional services often included a video that celebrated nature and sacred music to help congregants experience transcendence.

## Origins & style

A zoology graduate from the University of Liverpool and a Methodist minister trained at Cambridge University, he moved to Montreal in 2001. Since 2009, he has also worked as a certified massage therapist.

During the near decade of his ministry, Rev. Whitehouse has worked to make Westmount Park United an open-minded, modern community, with his North Star being environmental concerns.

For instance, climate-anxiety events were held, Green Coalition meetings took place, plant exchange programs sprouted up and a monthly sermon was delivered – not in the church’s sanctuary but in Summit Woods, through snow showers, sun beams and hail pellets.

In terms of his legacy, Rev. Whitehouse



Rev. Neil Whitehouse cutting his retirement cake on January 12, the day of his last service at Westmount Park United Church.

says he rejoices about the “faith-in-nature work” that has emerged and all its different facets, something that he is now taking to a wider audience than just his congregation as an emerging author.

## Message

In 2024, Wipf & Stock published his first book, *The Gospel of Jesus Green*, in which the chief contention is we need to focus on creating a home for all – not just humans. He told the *Independent* he will focus now on writing “part two” and is very motivated in having it published within the

next two to three years.

He said that he fell in love with the natural world as a teenager growing up in England. “I just love biology in all its aspects...”

“When I was writing my book *The Gospel of Jesus Green*, I looked at books on my bookshelf that I had from 30 years ago – when I was in the UK – and they were saying the same sort of things as contemporary books say about the orientation of corporate values, capitalism and the resistance to the science...”

“We do live on a limited planet. We do have to take into account the by-products of our activities and the needs of other living things.”

The second book will focus on the prophecy of Jesus Green. “About how difficult it is to make change because we don’t really understand ourselves...”

“And yet we’ve got no choice but to act for change in a faster fashion – than any generation before us – because time really is running out for civilization as we know it.”

## Legacy

After his departure, there will be a series of rotating ministers and lay-people leading the congregation until a permanent minister is found.

While he may be leaving Westmount,

## Indie coverage of Rev. Whitehouse

- “Guardians of post-nuclear ginkgo saplings walk for peace to recognize Peace Day” on October 1, 2024, p. 22,
- “Rev. Whitehouse of Westmount Park United publishes *The Gospel of Jesus Green*” on July 9, 2024, p. 17,
- “Atwater Club, Selwyn House receive ‘Green Legacy Hiroshima’ ginkgoes” November 28, 2023, p. 13,
- “Sharing the Faith – Part 4: The United Church – ‘When God created man, he over-estimated his ability,’” February 8, 2022, p. 20.

the municipality and environs will continue to profit from his bequest. Growing, blooming and casting shade are these Green Legacy Hiroshima ginkgo trees that he planted, some in collaboration with the office of sustainability at Dawson College, to mark World Peace Day on a peace trail map:

- Dawson College: 3040 Sherbrooke,
- Congrégation Notre Dame: 2330 Sherbrooke,
- Atwater Club: 3505 Atwater Ave.,
- Selwyn House School: 95 Côte St. Antoine,
- Westmount Park United Church: 4695 de Maisonneuve Blvd.
- The Unitarian Church: 5035 de Maisonneuve Blvd.

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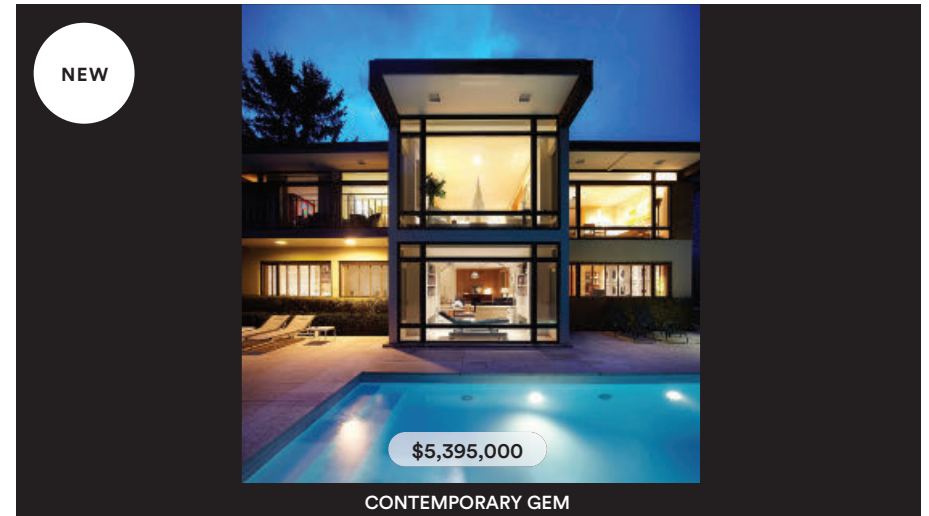
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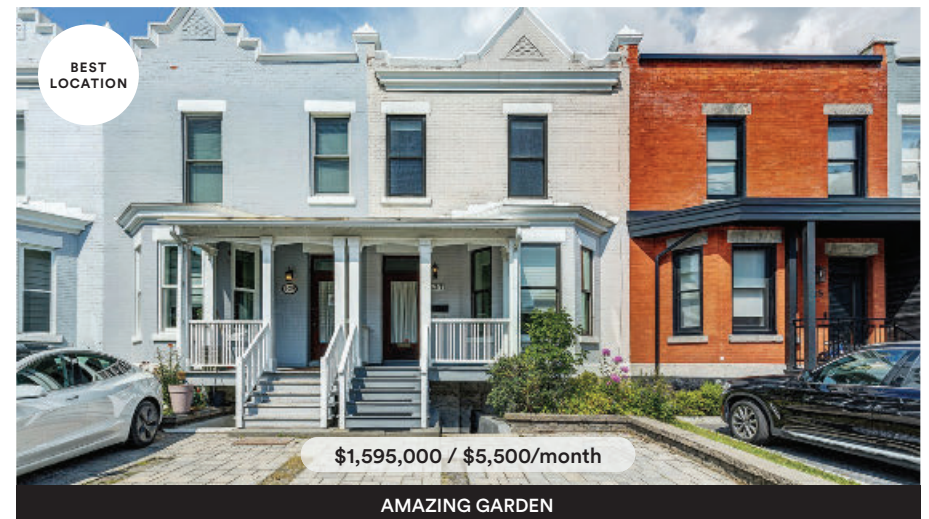
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