

New mayor to be chosen in November

Mayor Christina Smith not running again

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

Mayor Christina Smith told the *Independent* the day after the January 13 city council meeting that she had decided not to seek a third term as Westmount's mayor in the November elections to be held by all Quebec municipalities.

"It has been an enormous pleasure to serve 12 years on council, and I have loved it and don't regret anything," she said. "Now it's the right time for the next chapter in my life, for my family and career."

It was during the past year that the city had marked its 150th anniversary as well as the 125th year of the library. Both involved numerous events the mayor presided over after leading the city through the previous COVID period, a blue-collar strike,

a cyberattack and three changes of directors general.

"It's so important to be involved in such an incredible community, and there's still a lot of work to do for a whole new era," she added.

Following last year's construction of new pathways and playground in Westmount Park, the city will continue costly infrastructure work this year including the "Fordens" and Claremont. Meanwhile, public consultation continues on re-zoning in the southeast sector as a Special Planning Program to revitalize the commercial and Tupper parking areas. The latter are owned by the city.

Mayor Smith joined city council in 2013 as the councillor representing District 5 (Vic village below Sherbrooke) for four years. She was elected mayor by her council colleagues in 2017 after the near-end-of-term departure of longtime mayor Peter Trent, elected by the electorate over two competing candidates in 2017 and acclaim-

Rosenfeld, Mowat, Stevenson receive King Charles Coronation medal



At the Atwater Library on January 15, from left, Westmount residents Nancy Rosenfeld, Judith Mowat and Susan Stevenson were each awarded the King Charles III Coronation medal for their dedication to their communities. See story on p. 8.

PHOTOS: JENNIFER BALL

ed for the 2021-2025 term. In her current capacity, she is also serving as vice-president of the Public Security Commission of the agglomeration of Montreal.

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Who will run for another council term?

Here is what current councillors told the *Independent* last week when asked if they would seek re-election:

District 1: Antonio D'Amico: "Yes"

District 2: Elisabeth Roux:
"I'm inclined to run again."

District 3: Jeff Shamie: "Yes.
Very interested."

District 4: Conrad Peart:
"Too far ahead."

District 5: Anitra Bostock: Not
ready yet to declare.

District 6: Mary Gallery:
"Not made any decisions."

District 7: Matt Aronson: "Yes."

District 8: Kathleen Kez: "Yes.
80 percent."



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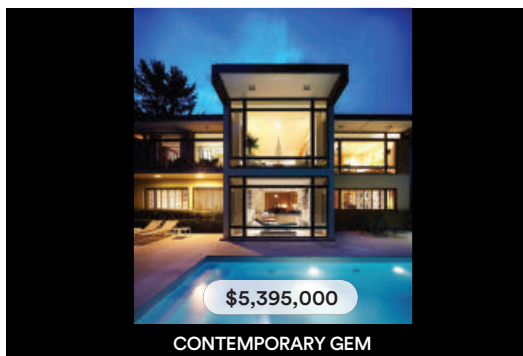
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Issues from last year continue ...

Council quizzed on need to densify southeast during long session



After the council meeting January 13, Mayor Christina Smith speaks with president of the Atwater Library Bruce Bolton, at left, as well as Carol Christie-Olsen, a director, and Geoffrey Dowd, vice-president. Before retirement, Dowd was a teacher at Selwyn House and the head of Trafalgar School for Girls.

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Lengthy question periods before and after the city council's first meeting of the new year, January 13, dealt mainly with ongoing issues that related to public consultations over proposed increased zoning heights in the southeast sector as well as tree cutting on the construction site at 500 Claremont, and even dog regulations in Summit Woods.

A delegation from the Atwater Library suggested that allowing high-rise buildings to be built on the south side of St. Catherine could lead to structural damage to the

196-year-old heritage building. They also asked what demographics justified the need for upzoning the area by allowing higher towers.

Concerning the library's significant heritage rating, president Bruce Bolton asked that its officials be given a seat at the decision table. "We just want to be involved," he said.

Questioners, including John Fretz and Patrick Barnard, also asked why new high-rise buildings in the area were even needed.

It was also stated that there still seemed to be available space in Westmount Square.

500 Claremont

Regarding recent tree cutting at the site of 500 Claremont, neighbouring resident Frank Philpott reminded council he had previously asked why five large trees at the south side of the construction site had been removed despite assurances they would be left in place (see story September 10, p. 1).

More recently, 10 or 11 more trees had been taken down. He held up large before-and-after photos showing how the privacy of next-door Claremont residents had been affected.

He was told by Councillor Peart that city regulations regarding limits on tree removal exclude those in the way of permitted construction.

Dogs/insurance in Summit Woods

Another outstanding concern, dog leashing in Summit Woods, was raised. This was followed by a comment from Councillor Antonio D'Amico, who recalled he had reported being advised by Quebec officials that the city should have a legal letter from its insurers protecting the city against someone being bitten by an unleashed dog in the area. He told the meeting he had never heard back.

Fretz said that last year had been the first in many years when the city's population had fallen below 20,000. Therefore, on what basis was densification justified?

Councillor Conrad Peart, whose commissionerhip includes urban planning, said there were no known projects planned for the south side of St. Catherine St. despite the Special Planning Program being considered but could materialize in the future. Mayor Christina Smith suggested that the future needs of nearby overcrowded Dawson College should be considered.

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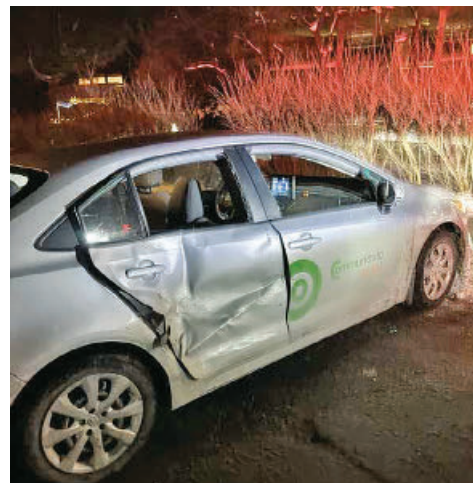
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Stolen car drives through red light, is hit by one with 2 children

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Patrollers were called to a car accident at Victoria and The Boulevard January 10 around 5:48 pm, Public Security officials said. The only person initially seen was a woman speaking on a phone who then went to check on two children in her car. No injuries were reported.

The woman, one of the drivers, stated she had been heading eastbound when a southbound vehicle went through a red light on Victoria, and two men dressed in black exited the vehicle and fled the scene



The stolen car.
PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT PUBLIC SECURITY

on foot. Officers blocked the street and directed traffic while awaiting police. It turns out the southbound car had been stolen.

For the police's view, see p. 6.

Car hits large rock at Summit Woods

Officers patrolling the upper levels of the city January 14 at 1:06 am came across a car on Oakland that appeared to have hit something, Public Security officials said. Two airbags were found to have been deployed.

Two occupants were sheltered in the patrol vehicle while awaiting fire department first responders and police. A tow truck was also requested. It appeared the car, a Tesla, had come around the corner in snowy conditions and hit a large rock next to the curb at Summit Woods, Public Security officials said. No one was reported injured.

Public Security follows, tracks down man stealing backpacks from car

A man was tracked down and arrested for theft of two backpacks from a car January 9 at 4:22 pm after patrollers stopped at a red light heard a car alarm sounding outside Alexis Nihon Plaza, Public Security officials said. A back window was found open to the car and a man spotted crossing the street and heading south on Atwater.

The car's owner returned soon after along with two daughters who reported their backpacks missing from the back seat. Meanwhile, police were called, Public Security tracked down the man previously seen and the backpacks recovered.

A 48-year-old resident of LaSalle was intercepted and released on a promise to appear in court.

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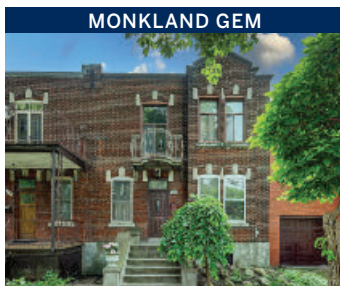
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Guest column

November's municipal election: Time for a change at city hall

By PETER TRENT

The virulence of social media has not made the elected official's job a happy one. Members of Westmount city council have understandably become highly sensitive to such criticism, especially considering the effort they put into their work. That said, council has brought onto itself some of the criticism levelled at it by readers of the *Independent*, a traditional medium thankfully free of any incoherent social media venom.

An allergy to consultation

Citizens' complaints have ranged from the imposition of the Lexington Ave. design and the tree planting in Murray Park to the 36-percent increase in the mayor's pay, the extinction of our fireplaces and the radical changes in garbage-removal practices. There is a common thread running through these and other post-COVID complaints: in each case, consultation was either *pro forma* or simply not on offer.

To be fair, council seems to be slowly introducing a modicum of consultation.

Montreal in microcosm

But problems go deeper than an allergy

to consulting taxpayers. Council has allowed its bureaucracy to run the city, mostly unguided by elected officials. Over the last seven years, Westmount city council has drifted into a way of operating that is more Montreal-style than Westmount-style. When we fought all the way to the Supreme Court [unsuccessfully] to prevent being swallowed up by Montreal in 2002 and when we voted 92 percent "yes" to free ourselves of Montreal's clutches by getting our city back in 2006, it was definitely not in order to replicate Montreal in microcosm.

Let me explain.

Two management styles: Hands-off and hands-on

City councils tend to adopt one of two styles of managing their civil service and its boss, the director general (DG). Let's call these styles hands-off and hands-on.

1. "Hands-off" governance is similar to the private-sector corporate model, where the mayor acts as chair and councillors as board-members, leaving administration up to the director general and department heads. The city of Montreal is mostly "hands off," with the executive committee (all elected officials) acting as the board, while Montreal's city council itself is only a posturing and partisan parliamentary talkshop. Meanwhile, Montreal's 24,000-strong civil service has a reputation for ignoring both politicians and citizenry.
2. With the "hands-on" governance style, the mayor is more involved, especially in major projects. Councillors, as well as representing citizens in a geographical area called a ward, can serve as pseudo-cabinet ministers by taking responsibility as a commissioner for a particular public service (public works, urban planning, finance or recreation, for example). This allows them to critique, then get behind, new projects and policy initiatives for presentation to

city council. Lastly, city staff are accessible to citizens directly and are not walled-off behind council.

Ironically, Westmount pioneered 'hands-off' management

In 1913, Westmount was the first city in Canada to operate with the director-general system of government, which was principally a "hands-off" style of management. Prior to 1991, this meant the DG and department heads ran everything and council simply set policy. An exception was made for commissioners, who were more "hands on" for their assigned department. The mayor was part-time and council remuneration was very modest with no fringe benefits such as pensions.

But this "hands-off" board-of-directors model came at a high price: by 1991, all our civic buildings were in a terrible state. Public Works had expertise in building roads, but not in restoring heritage architecture such as our 1899 library that was sporting fluorescent lighting and rotting windows, a crumbling greenhouse and a threadbare Victoria Hall that was rented out to carpet sellers. Crucially, the civil service did not have the means of getting the public behind the costly restoration projects required to put things right. It needed council to get involved. Hands on.

Major 'hands-on' building projects

From 1991 onwards, smaller building projects were spearheaded by members of council and managed by the civil service: this included restoring Victoria Hall with its new Gallery and the re-building of the lawn bowling clubhouse – with a new Hydro Westmount substation built underneath the greens.

But to manage the 1995 library renewal project – and nearly 20 years later, to build the Westmount recreation centre (WRC) – we created a building committee with its own professional project manager. The committee usually included the DG, a department head, the mayor and a councillor. It was independent of the civil service.

Both the library project and the WRC came in on time and on budget. And citizens felt part of each project thanks to a citywide poll that was followed by a public fundraising campaign. These are tasks that only a "hands-on" council could do.

How well has this city council performed?

It is difficult to assess Westmount councils' performance from late 2017 to early 2023. The city suffered a loss of administrative direction after going through two DGs (or no DG) – and having to resort to firing the last one outright. During this administrative acephalic period – nearly

six lost years – building projects such as the greenhouse were managed in a desultory fashion.

Council finally got around to hiring a competent DG in January 2023. But they are, strangely, favouring the pre-1991 "hands-off" governance model. For example, today's council often approves civil service recommendations holus-bolus: witness the recent change in garbage collection method and frequency. Council-members seem to view their job as supporting the civil service, not the reverse. In doing so, they are running the risk of being estranged from their citizens.

The southeast sector planning consultants

The "hands-off" attitude of today's council includes their treatment of outside consultants. To plan the development of the southeast sector, Westmount council inexplicably chose the firm of Lemay, whose colleagues designed the 38-storey behemoth at 1111 Atwater at the former Children's Hospital site in Montreal. Is it any wonder that Lemay's study recommends aping Montreal by building a forest of high-rises?

By their choice of consultant and their leaving the overall vision to be concocted by outsiders, Council has demonstrated no leadership in the urban planning of southeast Westmount. The result is our city will be importing the city of Montreal's family-averse high-rise solution to achieve density, thereby upending 40 years of Westmount's encouraging dense lower-rise construction that is respectful of our built heritage.

Council claims that putting up residential towers will "expand our tax base." But *one half* of the new tax revenue will be wiped out by increased payments to the [island of Montreal] agglomeration council. And the service demand of these new residents will require increased spending; after all, a theoretical doubling of Westmount's population would double our spending. In fact, Quebec's forced-merger fiasco produced *diseconomies* of scale: per capita, the more populous municipalities cost more to operate.

Municipalities, in selling new development, often invoke marginal costs: the concept of "fixed" costs that stay, *ah*, fixed, and "variable" costs that increase to meet new demand. But even "fixed" costs grow, but in a stepwise manner. Other costs – such as issuing building permits – exhibit a smoother relationship between added demand and added costs. Over the long haul, an increase in population results in an equivalent increase in spending. There are ex- *continued on p. 5*

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Westmount Battery granted \$3,000 for maintenance

Council adopts higher profile for city's two 1810 cannon

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council January 13 approved a grant of \$3,000 to the Westmount Battery, a non-profit entity, to maintain the city's two 1810 cannon. These had stood for many years in Westmount Park and came to be a well-known landmark before their restoration by volunteers under the name of the Westmount Battery.

"The volunteers who repair, maintain,

and display the city's two cannon in historically accurate period uniforms are very appreciative of the city's support," said battery president Patrick Martin, a resident of The Boulevard and a former city councillor who took on the cannon restoration project initiated by former councillor George Bowser. As a result of the work done, the cannon can again fire.

It was just recently that Bowser, a resident of Columbia Ave. and vice-president of

the battery, asked the city council for a list of potential dates when the cannon could be fired so that residents would be able to see them "in action" since they are now rarely seen in public except on Remembrance Day (see story December 10, p. 10).

Acknowledging they were a great part of the city's history, Mayor Christina Smith had told Bowser that "We are very supportive of the idea... Yes, we will get it into the calendar."

Guest column, cont'd from p. 4

ceptions to this rule: new multi-million-dollar condos for empty-nesters or non-residential development. But even then, any "profit" the city would make will go down the drain of the proposed municipal indoor pool, a facility that is notoriously costly to operate.

The state of our roads

Westmounters and non-Westmounters alike complain about our roads. In November 2016, when I was still mayor, council adopted a plan, using estimates from Public Works, to invest \$5 million a year in constant dollars from 2017 to 2037 just on road reconstruction and maintenance "to

catch up on the infrastructure deficit." The current council has honoured this plan.

So why are our streets in such a mess? Among the explanations, one is straightforward: Statistics Canada calculates Montreal construction costs have increased 50 percent since 2016 – double the consumer price index. Using pay-as-you-go, property taxes should have been increased each year to cover construction cost inflation. They were not.

Hydro Westmount

One last matter. This council has yet to do anything about the sad state of our constantly-deteriorating Hydro Westmount. There is no one in our civil service com-

petent to take on the modernization of this unique facility. The next council will have to grasp that nettle. And grasping a nettle is a hands-on job.

Remember, remember the second of November

As you cast your mind forward to the November 2 municipal elections and think about good people to run for office, I hope this exposé will be of some help in encouraging and ultimately choosing good candidates to effect the change needed at city hall.

Peter F. Trent is a former mayor of Westmount. He was in office from 1991 to 2001 and from 2009 to 2017.



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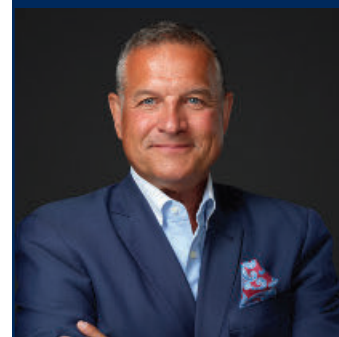
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THANK YOU, CAMPBELLS

I would like to express my gratitude to Kevin Campbell and his uncle John Campbell (Campbell Picture Framing, 4916 Sherbrooke St.) for their kindness.

I was re-tracing my steps in freezing cold weather in an attempt to find my missing wallet, and just when I felt it was a lost cause, Mr. Campbell (whom I had never met) handed me my wallet with its contents untouched, explaining to me that his nephew had found it in a snowbank and immediately brought it to him to find its owner.

It was a very dramatic moment for me. As one can imagine, a wallet is the keeper of very important cards.

I am so very grateful for their honesty! It restores my faith in humanity and the belief in the integrity of my neighbours! There is still some humanity in our Westmount community! A million thanks to Kevin and John Campbell!

People, get your frames done by Mr. Campbell! Honesty is his policy!

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RE-ZONING SOUTHEAST
REQUIRED TO BRING LIFE
BACK TO NEIGHBOURHOOD

As the owner of a building across from Westmount Square, I have had a front-row seat to the decline of my neighbourhood. When the Canadiens played at the Forum, the area was bustling. In fact, the McDonald's on the corner of Atwater and St.

Catherine was rumoured to be one of the most profitable in Montreal. Today, the block is in disrepair and buildings on the south side of St. Catherine from Wood to Atwater are boarded up.

Thankfully, Westmount city council is on the verge of taking the steps necessary to bring new life to my neighbourhood. It is in the process of developing a special planning program – known in French as a *Programme particulier d'urbanisme* (PPU) – that would allow for the construction of high-rise towers along St. Catherine, replacing zoning put in place more than a decade ago that limits buildings to seven storeys.

Some are arguing for the status quo, even though it is my understanding that no developer has brought forward a conforming project since the aforementioned zoning change. Furthermore, a high-rise will fit with the neighbourhood since the buildings on the north side – 1 Wood, Westmount Square and Alexis Nihon – are multi-story buildings.

I should also point out the re-development of this eastern course of Westmount will boost the city's tax revenues, which is timely as we struggle to maintain our infrastructure.

We also have a communal responsibility to do our bit in addressing the housing crisis and to provide our young people, families and seniors with more options.

Mayor Smith and her team are not imposing their views on residents. Rather

their plan stems from a long and comprehensive consultation process. Of course, there is opposition, but it would be irresponsible to think that keeping the zoning as is will achieve a different result than

what is there right now: a blight on our city and an eyesore.

BILLY MAUER, FURST GROUP,
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'Catering By George' founder
Alevisatos passes on at age 86

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

George Alevisatos, who along with other members of his family was at one time a component of Westmount's Greene Ave. commercial district, passed away in late December at the age of 86.

Established in 1970, Catering by George, which he founded and which was recognized in its day as one of the leading catering services in Quebec, was just one of the Alevisatos family's ventures with connections to Westmount.

Nick's Restaurant, though now under the ownership of Nicos Kyriakopoulos (see August 27, 2024, p. 17), was run by George's parents, Nicholas and Florence, for decades. George's brother, Tom, now also deceased, took over after them.

According to an obituary published in *The Gazette* earlier this month, George Alevisatos was community-minded and active in professional sports as well as the food and hospitality business.

In the Canadian Pro Football Encyclopedia, he is listed as having played seven regular-season football matches in the 1960 and 1962 seasons as a defensive lineman for several Canadian Football League teams, including the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the Montreal Alouettes.

Hoppenheim remembers

Howard Hoppenheim, a resident of The Boulevard who ran a receivership trustee business from offices on Greene, said Catering By George's owner was a longtime fixture on the street.

Police Report

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Police at Station 12 have opened an investigation into the theft last week of a Communauto car-sharing vehicle, followed by a collision after it went through a red light at the corner of The Boulevard and Victoria Ave.

According to Station 12 community relations officer Cst. Mike Yigit, the vehicle was stolen in Côte des Neiges.

"From what I can tell, there were no injuries," said Yigit. However, the driver and a passenger fled the scene.

"His presence was extraordinary," said Hoppenheim, noting that over the years he attended countless social gatherings and functions where Alevisatos was in charge of the catering.

"I would bump into him frequently on Greene," he continued. "He was a very humble man. Even though he had been a professional football player, he never bragged about it." The obituary described the extent to which Alevisatos would go to please his customers.

"George loved to reminisce about how he had to use his creativity to take an open-air space or a warehouse and turn it into a party room," it said. "From building a cantilever over a cliff to enlarging the guest area to feeding thousands of guests a four-to-five course sit-down meal."

George Alevisatos leaves behind his wife of 57 years, Linda, his sisters Georgina (Dominic Barbado) and Maria (John Gilseman), his brother Jerry (Jackie), his sisters-in-law Wendy Wilcox (Bill) and Cecile Seguin, as well as several nephews.

Services

A celebration of his life was to be held at Kane & Fetterly on Décarie Blvd. on January 19.

A second celebration is planned for a later date at Creg Quay near Bainsville in eastern Ontario, where he and his wife had lived for the past 13 years.

Anyone wishing to be informed of the second event is asked to send an email to george1343@gmail.com. Once details are available a notice will be returned.

Investigators examining the car afterwards noted that a passenger-side window was broken, leading them to speculate this was probably how the thieves got in and were able to steal the vehicle.

As most of the cars in Communauto's fleet are of relatively low value, he suggested the motivation for this theft was probably joy riding.

"They probably got into the vehicle just to get around, then went through a red light and didn't see the other vehicle," said Yigit. "Sometimes, too, people who take cars to joyride don't have a driver's license so they're inexperienced."

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

We are Westmount

Editor

David Price: 514.935.4537
editor@westmountindependent.com

Chief reporter

Laureen Sweeney

Graphics

Ted Sancton

Advertising sales

Aleen Candiotti: 514.223.3567
advertising@westmountindependent.com

Classified ads

514-664-6138

Accounting

Beth Hudson: 514.223.6138
office@westmountindependent.com

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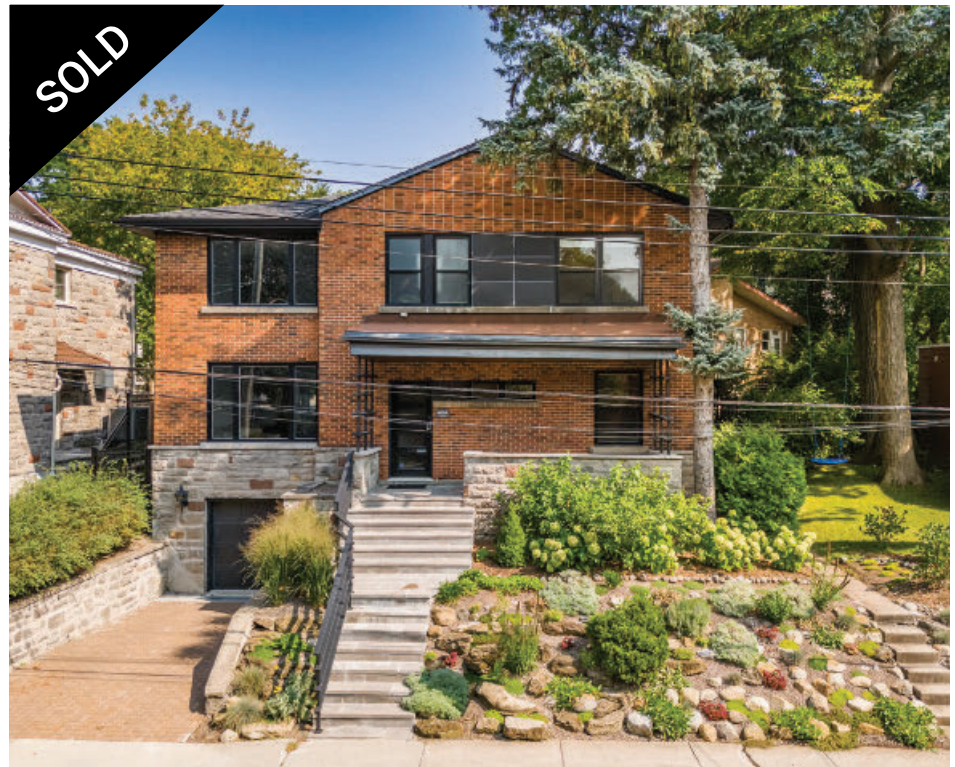
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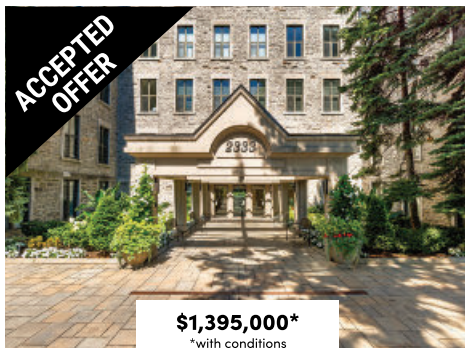
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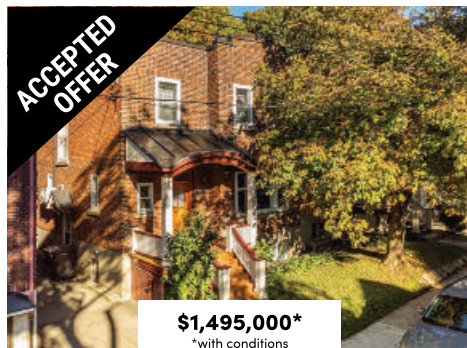
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For dedication to their communities

Mowat, Rosenfeld & Stevenson were awarded King Charles III Coronation medal

BY JENNIFER BALL

Three Westmount women, Judith Mowat, Nancy Rosenfeld and Susan Stevenson, were awarded the King Charles III Coronation medal for their dedication to their communities at a recent awards ceremony. It was held on January 15 at the Atwater Library, which is located at 1200 Atwater, corner of Tupper St.

Mowat

The citation for Mowat read that “For

decades as a chartered accountant, you have generously donated your expertise to numerous organizations, notably as a board member for the St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Homes Foundation, a seniors’ residence [found at 3350 Cavendish Blvd. in NDG] where your guidance and insights have been invaluable.”

Rosenfeld

Rosenfeld’s citation read, “Your dedication to culture, health and social justice transforms communities. By creating in-

novation programmes and engendering diversity and equality, you leave a profound legacy of advocacy: fostering meaningful change and inspiring progress for future generations.”

Rosenfeld told the *Independent* “It is a privilege to be a volunteer...”

“I came from a family where my mother volunteered and even though I was a professional for 50 years, in public service, I always volunteered and now that I am semi-retired, I am doing more volunteer work...”

“I got the Diamond Jubilee award also, but we do not do these things for awards.”

Rosenfeld received the Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012, and she indicated that the criteria was like the King Charles III Coronation medal: for her community service in a variety of sectors.

She does not know who nominated her for the medal, but “I would like to thank who ever did!”

Rosenfeld is a firm believer in the motto that with privilege comes responsibility.

“A vast majority of the people who read your paper lead privileged lives and I believe we have a responsibility to put ourselves out there – and do things for other people – who live less privileged lives.”

2025 will show that Rosenfeld chaired the Westmount library commissioners. “I sat as a commissioner for two years and I did not realize, until I joined, that we were the first [municipal] library in Quebec...”

“Talk about being privileged! To be a commissioner for that is fabulous.”

Stevenson

The citation for Stevenson noted that she was receiving the medal because “[her] decades of volunteer leadership in education and community service have inspired other people [through] your expertise and mentorship...”

“Your contributions, particularly with the Mont Royal cemetery and Trafalgar School for Girls embodied dedication and

a lasting commitment to service.”

She admitted with a smile that “I do a lot of volunteer work!”

Canada created the commemorative medal to mark the coronation of King Charles III on May 6, 2023. It celebrates the outstanding achievements of individuals of all ages and backgrounds who have distinguished themselves in their communities.

The medal may be awarded only once. See photos on p. 1.

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Notice of Relocation – Dr. A Reznik

Le cabinet dentaire du Dr. Anna Reznik déménage dans un nouvel emplacement au Groupe Dentaire Drummond. Pour prendre rendez-vous, vous pouvez continuer à utiliser le (514) 939-3468 ou le numéro ci-dessous. Les dossiers patients a été transféré à la nouvelle clinique auprès des Drs Konanec et Turcotte, afin d’assurer la continuité de vos soins. Dr. Reznik sera ravie de continuer à vous servir, au 1538, rue Sherbrooke O, bureau 300, Montréal, QC, H3G 1L5, Canada (514) 842-7311.

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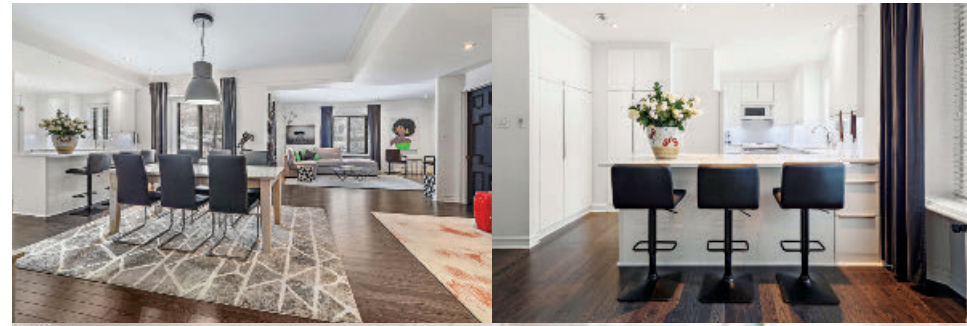
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Canadians are strong



This man in shorts was seen on Sherbrooke St. between Prince Albert and Claremont January 10. It was about -8°C.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.



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NOUVELLES

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DU CONSEIL

Lundi 3 février

NEWS

NEXT COUNCIL
MEETING

Monday, February 3



La mairesse Smith ne briguera pas un 3^e mandat

La mairesse Christina M. Smith a annoncé qu'elle ne briguera pas un 3^e mandat lors des prochaines élections municipales en novembre 2025. Lisez sa déclaration. westmount.org



Mayor Smith announces decision not to seek re-election

Mayor Christina M. Smith has announced that she will not be seeking re-election at in the upcoming municipal elections in November 2025. Read her statement. westmount.org

Session d'information sur la reconstruction de l'avenue Claremont

30 janvier, 17 h 30, Victoria Hall. Venez découvrir le modèle d'aménagement privilégié conçu à partir des activités participatives et des études réalisées. Présentez-vous à cette activité portes ouvertes, à votre convenance. westmount.org/projetclaremont

Modifications à venir du système de stationnement avec permis en 2025

La Ville introduira un système de permis de stationnement en ligne, éliminant les autocollants physiques et associant automatiquement les droits de stationnement au numéro de plaque des résidents. westmount.org

Public information session for the reconstruction of Avenue Claremont

January 30, 5:30 p.m., Victoria Hall. Discover the preferred design model created from the participatory activities and studies conducted. Attend this open house activity at your convenience. westmount.org/claremontproject

Upcoming changes to permit parking in 2025

The City will introduce an online parking permit system, eliminating physical stickers and automatically linking parking rights to residents' vehicle license plate numbers. westmount.org

Réduction sa consommation d'électricité lors de grands froids

Informez-vous des bonnes pratiques pour éviter de surcharger les circuits et réduire le risque de pannes. westmount.org

Modernisation de la collecte sélective des matières recyclables

Depuis le 1^{er} janvier, tout contenant, emballage ou imprimé fait de plastique, papier, carton, verre ou métal est accepté dans le bac bleu de récupération. westmount.org/recyclage

Reducing electricity consumption during extreme cold

Learn more about best practices to prevent circuits from overloading and reduces the chance of outages. westmount.org

Modernization of the selective collection of recyclable materials

Since January 1, all containers, packaging, or printed materials made of plastic, paper, cardboard, glass, or metal are accepted in the blue recycling bin. westmount.org/recycling

BIBLIOTHÈQUE ET ÉVÉNEMENTS COMMUNAUTAIRES

Parlons opéra! — L'Enfant et les Sortilèges (Ravel)

26 janvier, 14 h, Victoria Hall. Fort de son grand succès communautaire remporté lors de sa présentation au Théâtre Paradoxe en février 2023, L'Enfant et les Sortilèges de Ravel est un spectacle qui s'adresse à toute la famille. westmount.org



Ciné-club : Ru (2023)

28 janvier, 14 h, Victoria Hall. En français et en vietnamien avec sous-titres en anglais. Un drame québécois réalisé par Charles-Olivier Michaud. C'est l'histoire du voyage ardu d'une famille aisée fuyant le Vietnam pour Québec en 1975 après la chute de Saïgon. westmount.org

Rencontre d'auteur — Church of Books

29 janvier, 19 h, Salle Westmount. Avec les auteurs Michelle Syba et Daniel Allen Cox. Vous êtes invités à assister à une conversation entre un ancien témoin de Jéhovah et une ancienne pentecôtiste, au cours de laquelle sera examinée la manière dont la lecture de la littérature peut ébranler les schémas de pensée fondamentalistes. westlib.org

Bloomsday — Anniversaire de James Joyce

2 février, 14 h, Salle Westmount. Venez découvrir les gens et les personnages qui se cachent dans les coulisses de son œuvre. En collaboration avec le Festival Bloomsday Montréal. westlib.org

Cercle littéraire avec l'Institut Thomas More

6 février, 14 h, Salle Westmount. Participez à une discussion ouverte sur un court récit sélectionné. Deux animatrices de l'Institut Thomas More nous guideront à travers la nouvelle *The Lottery* de Shirley Jackson. westlib.org

LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Let's Talk Opera! — L'Enfant et les Sortilèges (Ravel)

January 26, 2 p.m., Victoria Hall. Bolstered by huge community success at the Théâtre Paradoxe in February 2023, Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* is an opera for the whole family. westmount.org



Film Club: Ru (2023)

January 28, 2 p.m., Victoria Hall. In French and Vietnamese with English subtitles. A Quebec drama directed by Charles-Olivier Michaud. The story of the arduous journey of a wealthy family fleeing from Vietnam to Quebec in 1975 after the fall of Saigon. westmount.org

Author event — Church of Books

January 29, 7 p.m., Westmount Room. With authors Michelle Syba and Daniel Allen Cox. Join us for a conversation between an ex-Jehovah's Witness and an ex-Pentecostal, where we'll explore how reading literature can shake up fundamentalist ways of thinking. westlib.org

Bloomsday — James Joyce's birthday

February 2, 2 p.m., Westmount room. Join us to discover more about the people and characters lurking behind the scenes in his work. In collaboration with the Festival Bloomsday Montreal. westlib.org

Literature Circle with the Thomas More Institute

February 6, 2 p.m., Westmount room. Join an open-ended discussion about a selected short story. Two facilitators from the Thomas More Institute will guide us through the short story *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson. westlib.org

Seven-year-old Chang is world grand champ on the abacus



Bruce Chang with some of his birthday paraphernalia.

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Two really great things happened to Bruce Chang recently.

For starters, the young Westmounter celebrated his birthday and turned seven.

More importantly, in December he became the UCMAS World Grand Champion for his competency level on the abacus.

Bruce, a student at St. George's elementary school, became the abacus Grand Champion of Canada last year during the 2024 Universal Concept Mental Arithmetic System (UCMAS) National Competition (see July 2, p. 1).

With that achievement under his cap, his parents decided he should go on to compete as a member of the Canadian team at the UCMAS World Championships in New Delhi, India last month.

"There were about 6,000 competitors from over 30 countries," his father, Arthur, said in an interview with the *Independent*.

A lot of people would give up a lot to be able to say they're number one in the world for just about anything.

Bruce, clearly with a head focused on the logic of numbers, tends to be monosyllabic when responding to how he feels about it.

"Proud and happy," was his three-word response last week.

For thousands of years, the abacus was acknowledged to be one of the world's fastest and most efficient tools for rapidly making calculations.

Although today it remains in use in some developing regions of the world, it has become more commonly seen in educational settings, where it is used for teaching elementary mathematics.

As such, the UCMAS has established itself as an international program that helps young students develop mathematical skills through the use of the abacus.

"We like it because it balances both sides of the brain," said Bruce's father, maintaining that the UCMAS has helped make his son's overall performance in school sharper.

"I think it's helping him with problem solving, developing his confidence, learning to creatively approach problems, thinking outside the box – these are all things I think we've all started to notice," he said.

Among other things, Bruce is now able to beat Arthur at chess.

"Now when I play chess with him, I don't stand a chance," said his father, noting that Bruce is also making great strides while learning to play the piano.

Commission scolaire English-Montreal
English Montreal School Board



*"Private
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Public
Spirit"*



From left: top row: Noam Caron, Grade 5 Caribou Math; and Taylor Wiseman, Grade 6 GIPS, Caribou Math and Battle of the Books. Bottom row (all in Destination Imagination): Sharon Georgia Hauerstock, Grade 3; Max Rose, Grade 2 and Stella Maria Grassi Tropea, Grade 1.

"Caribou contest did a wonder to his self-confidence and really helped him to develop his perseverance," said Louis Caron, parent of Noam Caron. Noam ranked #1 Internationally in Caribou Cup, part of Roslyn's gifted and enrichment program.

*

Nestled in a stately red brick Victorian building in the heart of Westmount since 1908, Roslyn Elementary School is known for its French immersion bilingual curriculum and high academic standards.

The school also promotes kindness and community spirit while preparing students for a bright future and leadership opportunities.

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- Roslyn enrichment student Noam Caron ranked **#1 Internationally in Caribou Math Cup** in 2023-2024 (out of 9059 global participants) and some ranked 2-5% Internationally - Wow!
- **Caribou Math, Global Issues and Problem Solving, Let's Talk Science, Destination Imagination, and Battle of the Books** enrichment programs keep gifted young minds motivated and confident.

Extra-Curricular Activities Kids Love including robotics, musical theatre, basketball, soccer, creative video, and much more offered through Roslyn's Hands (Home and School) Association.

A Legacy of Success with famous alum including Leonard Cohen, MP Anna Gainey, actor Jay Baruchel, and Astronomer David H. Levy.

Register Now for 2025-2026 and join Roslyn's thriving and vibrant and community! Enrollment begins Monday January 27 at 7am.

Don't miss the opportunity for your child to enjoy a **rich history of excellence**. Spots fill quickly!

roslyn.emsb.qc.ca/roslyn

At the Shaar

Israeli Arab Haddad disputes Amnesty International claims

BY JENNIFER BALL

Amnesty International claims Israel imposes apartheid on Palestinians across all areas under its control, but Israeli Arab Yoseph Haddad asked how that could be true given his life experiences.

Haddad was on a speaking tour of Canada and spoke December 3 at the Shaar, which is located at 450 Kensington Ave.

He told the large audience “When I speak about my experience as an [Israeli] Arab – whom Amnesty International categorizes as a someone who lives under an apartheid regime – I [remember that I] was a commander over Jewish soldiers.”

Amnesty International’s website cites “... [Our recent] investigation shows that Israel imposes a system of oppression and domination against Palestinians across all areas under its control: in Israel and the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territory], and against Palestinian refugees, in order to benefit Jewish Israelis. This amounts to apartheid as prohibited in international law...”

Background

Born in Haifa, Israel, Haddad moved with his family to Nazareth at age three. At 18, he volunteered to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In 2006, he was on active duty when Hezbollah severely injured him, severing his leg.

He is now a journalist and a lecturer working to improve relations between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

Last year, he made headlines when he was kicked out of a debate on whether “Israel is an apartheid state responsible for genocide” that the Oxford Union had invited him to attend on November 28.

The storied debating society, founded in 1823, announced results that 278 attendees (versus 59) were in favour of the proposition that Israel is an apartheid state that is committing genocide, a result Haddad claimed on December 3 was reached “... way before we arrived [in Oxford] ...

He summarized: “We came to have a respectful debate, but it wasn’t.”

It is a practice among at least some university debaters to score debates based on the performance in the room, not their actual sentiments.

The debate

The debate featured several prominent speakers on both sides of the topic.

Joining Haddad were pro-Israel advocates Natasha Hausdorff, a British lawyer;



Yoseph Haddad at the Shaar on December 3, 2024.

Jonathan Sacerdoti, a British journalist who covers the UK and Europe for i24 News; and Hamas-member-turned-Israeli-spy Mosab Hassan Yousef.

Arguing against Israel were union president Ebrahim Osman-Mowafy, Israeli-American activist and author Miko Peled, Palestinian-American author Susan Abulhawa, and Mohammed El-Kurd, a Palestinian writer and poet.

Haddad said, “I am proud to be expelled from an Oxford debate because I insisted on throwing out the students who took down the posters of [...] hostages and stamped on them.”

The *Oxford Student* newspaper had a different take on what precipitated his expulsion. “Following a speech from a member of the audience speaking for proposition, Haddad attempted to obstruct her as she returned to her seat and was promptly asked to leave.”

Council grants \$40,000 to each of 2 merchant groups

City council January 13 awarded grants of \$40,000 each to the city’s merchant associations in each of commercial districts. These are the Quartier Greene association in the east-end and the Victoria Village Merchants’ Association in the west



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

A happy and affectionate little one, Simmy is very keen on companionship with family and other cats.

She is noted as doing very well in her foster home for the animal rescue volunteer group Gerdy’s Rescue & Adoptions.

A gorgeous, sleek midnight black with huge green eyes, Simmy is a delightful friend to all, purring and playing. Starting her day with cuddles and then trotting along with breakfast on her mind, she is kitchen bound, communicating very well that a good meal is awaited in her bowl.

She is a very healthy six-year-old, up to date with her inoculations, spayed and microchipped.

If you would like more information on her, please refer to the Gerdy’s Rescue & Adoptions website at www.gerdysrescue.org, then fill out their adoption application

Miss Simmy

form through the link presented there. By providing your contact information, the rescue volunteers will be able to contact you to discuss your interest and adoption. They also have more wonderful photographs of Simmy at play and cuddling, a dear friend to be welcomed by a forever family.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne



Victoria Hall’s 15-year-old stage lighting to be replaced



Victoria Hall on January 20.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

City council January 3 awarded a contract to replace stage lighting at Victoria Hall to Le Groupe Teknison at a maximum of \$45,389.83. Installed more than 15 years ago, several components of the lighting system were described as “defective and/or

outdated,” according to a resolution moved by Councillor Elisabeth Roux, commissioner of the library and community events. The proposal was recommended by the city’s Information Technology department.

end for a total of \$80,000.

The grants are conditional to the associations submitting their financial statements for the fiscal year ending 2024 and a breakdown of how the grant funds will be allocated.

City councillor Matt Aronson, whose commissionership includes economic development, moved the resolution as a new business item that had not been listed on the council agenda.



Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Tenors, ‘fire’ make things electric at Arthritis Society eve

The Arthritis Society of Canada premiered its Montreal fundraiser at Le Richmond. Guests marvelled at the massive supermoon as they trod the red carpet lit by flickering flames, appropriate as the

gala theme was “*Bal en feu.*”

The evening’s fun was kickstarted by The Tenors, ambassadors for the society. The live auction featured a weekend for two with The Tenors in Palm Springs.

Auctioneer **Patrick Langlois’** dynamic style also inspired great bids for a print by Roberto Dutesco, dinner and a show for two at the Cabaret du
Casino and two round- *continued on p. 14*



The Tenors: Eduardo Aguirre, Mark Masri, Barry Garber, Victor Micallef and Clifton Murray.



Iqbal Nasser, Anny Nasser, Jennifer Stewart, Elizabeth Hanna, Alexandra Livernoche, Nigar Sultana and Azmin Jaffer.



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Charles LePierres and Judith Richardson.



Diana and Roy Gazdar.



Arthritis Society CEO Trish Barbato.

Social notes, cont'd from p. 13

trip business-class tickets to Europe offered by Air Canada.

Special guest **Diana Gazdar** shared her story. Diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in her early thirties, she faces pain and mobility challenges daily yet juggles a demanding career and life with her husband and daughters.

Arthritis Society CEO **Trish Barbato** pointed out that six million people suffer from arthritis in Canada.

“It’s time to change the narrative. Many people think arthritis is a disease of the elderly, but statistics tell a different story. About three in 1,000 Canadian children have childhood arthritis, which makes it more common than most chronic childhood diseases.”

Led by **Alain Saumur**, Arthritis Society vp Quebec and Atlantic Canada, **Alexandra Livernoche** and chair **Megan Armitage**, committee members were **Hugues Poulin**, **Cathie Juster**, **Deborah Greenberg**, **Jean-Jacques De Bruycker**, **Judith Richardson** and **Charles Le Pierrès**, **Stu Guttman** and **Adeline Nicole Gai**. (Full disclosure: I was also a volunteer on the committee.)

Noted at the elegantly set tables were **Robert Trudeau**, CEO Air Canada; **Daphne Tsadilas-Shamie** and **Jeff Shamie**, CEO Cedars Cancer Foundation; **Carla Spina**,

CEO, NOA Therapies; **Barry Garber**, president, Garber IMC; **Jeffery Latimer**, CEO Canada’s Walk of Fame and co-founder/ Partner LOFT Entertainment; **Robert Paul Juster**, **Julie Hurtubise** and **Stephen Dupuis**, TD Wealth Management; **Martin Belanger**, Telus Health; **Patrice Gilbert**, founder CEO PetalMD; **Premela Pearson**, co-founder/president Arthritis South Shore; **Mark Hounsell**, CAE Inc.; **Michael Casia** president Organon; **An-Lap Vo-Dignard**, senior wealth advisor, National Bank; McKesson’s vps **Ramzi Koleilat**, **Alexandre Mahfoud** and **John Kappos**; and researchers **Maria Fernandes** (University Laval) and **Shawn Robbins** (McGill).

Tables sported bountiful bouquets created by Flore, local go-to for fabulous florals. Emcee was CBC’s **Catherine Verdon-Diamond**. Ignite sponsors were Judith and Charles; beverage partners were Gruvi and SAQ.

As I collected my valet-parked car, local res **Barry Garber**, The Tenors’ international agent, gave me a scoop. Grammy-award-winning producer **Emilio Estefan** will produce the group’s new record.

The electric night raised \$225,000, enabling the society to provide essential programs and conduct groundbreaking research for the 1.2 million people living with arthritis in Quebec.

Shadow a growing puppy



Westmount
A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

At nine months of age, Shadow is a very handsome and intelligent German shepherd-type.

He is presently at the Montreal SPCA kennel, ready for visits and adoption in an experienced family that has trained a large, bright puppy. Tall and athletic, he is an active and social pup who does well on an exercise and skill-based routine.

Very healthy, up to date with his inoculations for his age, he is neutered and microchipped.

If you would like more information on Shadow and would like to plan a visit, please go to the Montreal SPCA’s website at www.sPCA.com, then refer to his information page from his identification number, 2000224008. The shelter is open every day, from 3 pm to 8 pm from Monday to Friday, and from 11 am to 6 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

The SPCA is located at 5215 Jean Talon



St. West, Côte des Neiges, Montreal H4P 1X4.

Please plan to visit the volunteers and meet Shadow. He is a stunning fellow who will shine in a family environment in our neighbourhood where we have the facilities and the canine companionships for him to enjoy best times.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne

Clarification

In a story January 14, p 8 on the painting of the Wardleworth house at 178 Côte Antoine: the last paragraph should read that it is the “painting” that will be featured in the Westmount Historical Association’s February newsletter rather the house itself which is no longer owned by Canadian Heritage of Quebec, but now privately owned.

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