

City's director general Hurtubise on medical leave

Past DGs Campbell, St. Louis step up in interim

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Mayor Christina Smith announced at the council meeting February 15 that the city's director general, Benoit Hurtubise, will be on medical leave for an unknown period of time but that two of the city's retired directors general will return to share the responsibilities.

The council appointed Duncan Campbell, who managed the city from 2008 to 2014, to be interim director general and look after the regular day-to-day running of the city, with a focus on the administrative side.

Bruce St. Louis, who retired in 2008 after 15 years at the helm, will be assistant director general, more focused on operational services and major projects such as

greenhouse restoration, revitalization of Westmount Park and Imagine 2040.

"I'm very grateful both have agreed and are very, very keen to do so," Mayor Smith said. "Both have the advantage of knowing many of the staff, who were informed of the situation last week. Everything is set up for them to work remotely as does most of the staff."

Campbell steered the city through the \$40-million planning and building of the Westmount recreation centre (WRC).

St. Louis held the top position during the ice storm of '98, the merger years with Montreal, the library renewal and numerous projects throughout a 33-year-career with the city.

In retirement, St. Louis *continued on p. 19*

For some of the history of these two former DGs, see p. 18-19

DG memories from '08



Duncan Campbell, left, in August 2008 when his appointment as DG was announced. He is in front of a painting of his great-grandfather, George Hogg, mayor of Westmount from 1927 to 1932. Bruce St. Louis, above, in January 2008, when his retirement as DG was announced.

PHOTOS: LAUREEN SWEENEY

Two public consultations March 15

Demo requests received for 345 Melville, 314-316 Lansdowne


BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Two city demolition meetings are to take place on Zoom March 15, both to explain the requests and replacement proposals. They start at 6:30 pm. Each project is located just north of de Maisonneuve.


One is to demolish a current four-family residence at 345 Melville immediately adjacent to the Serbian Orthodox Church and

across from the playing field in Westmount Park. The plan is to replace it with a six-family building that would be non-conforming to current zoning and would require approval under the SCAOPI by-law for Specific Construction, Alteration or Occupancy Proposal for an Immovable.

The other demolition request concerns 314 and 316 Lansdowne. This is across the street *continued on p. 5*



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Machine acquired to groom new cross-country ski tracks

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A machine has been purchased by the city to groom its two new cross-country ski tracks, at King George (Murray) Park and the Westmount Athletic Grounds (WAG). They were officially operational February 9. Although oval in configuration, they are being called “trails.”

“The machine can be pulled behind a 4x4 to regularly groom the trails at night

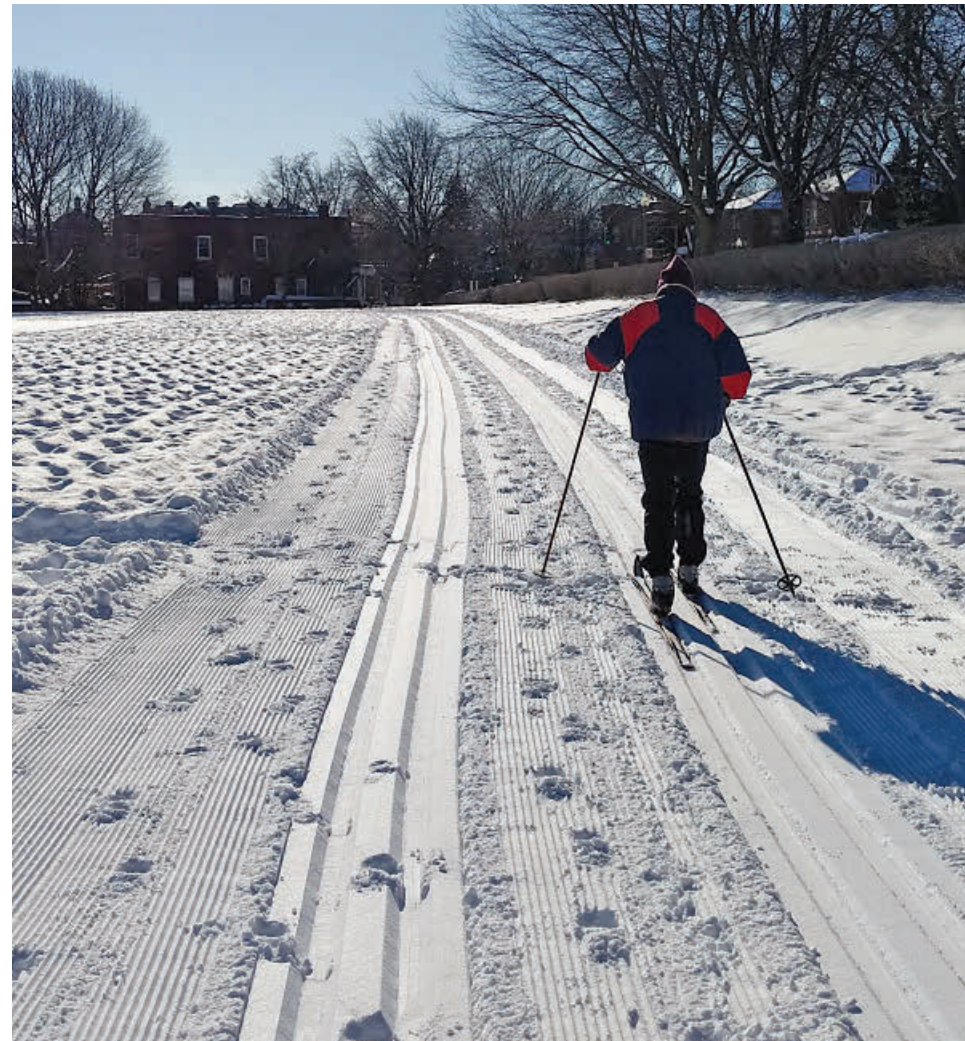
when needed,” said Councillor Cynthia Lulham, whose commissionership includes parks.

The two tracks are oval in shape, built, in one case on the soccer field in Murray Park and, in the other, just inside the main oval track at the WAG, which is being plowed this year for pedestrians and is being well used, especially in the late morning, Lulham said.

The tracks were created by the same

contractor hired by the city to build the toboggan run in Murray Park after a council decision to introduce the cross-country tracks as another outdoor activity for residents during the pandemic restrictions, she explained. Now, with the new machine, the city’s own Public Works crews can maintain the tracks.

“One more COVID-inspired asset which will help promote healthy active living in Westmount,” said Dan Lambert president of the Association of Pedestrians and Cyclists of Westmount.



A cross-country skier in action taken early Feb 9 at Murray Park.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAN LAMBERT



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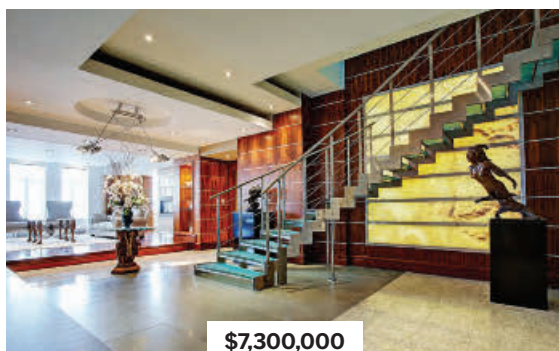
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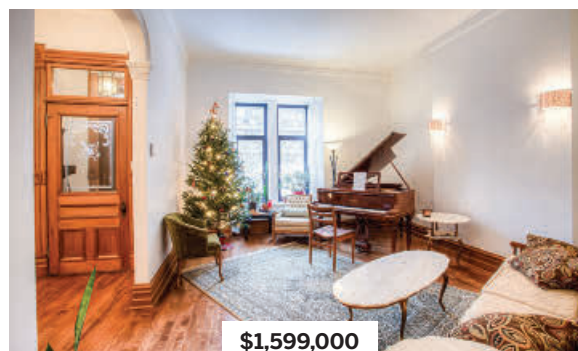
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WON'T A LANSDOWNE PARKING CHANGE ADD SPACES?

I received in the mail, from the city of Westmount's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), a poll addressed to the residents of Lansdowne between de Maisonneuve and Sherbrooke, soliciting our opinions on a proposal to move on-street parking from the west side to the east. Ignoring evidence of carelessness in the preparation of this document (a sentence appears twice; staple in the upper right corner; badly distorted photo), I am concerned about the statement "...moving parking to the east side will result in the loss of two parking spaces."

How was this calculated? And why does it differ so radically from the minutes of the TAC meeting of December 2020 noting that there would be an additional four spaces from the move?

In a letter to the editor (August 25, 2020, p. 22) I had suggested, in support of moving parking to the east side, that there would be a gain of parking spaces as there are far fewer driveways on that side. I could add that one or two spots lost on the west side because of a fire hydrant would also be recuperated.

In that letter, I opined that since the east sidewalk is used by seniors going between Contactivity and Manoir Westmount, as well as children and other users of the Westmount recreation centre, a row of

parked cars on the east side of the street would protect these vulnerable pedestrians from vehicular traffic and from being splashed by rainwater or slush. The poll document fails to mention any of these considerations.

Should I conclude that this TAC poll was just carelessly put together (blame the epidemic and people working from home) or was it deliberately designed to discourage the change in parking?

HENRY OLDERS, LANSDOWNE AVE.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

Moving parking to the east side of Lansdowne won't improve traffic matters, but will cause ongoing dissention and traffic chaos. Those who petitioned for it will be happy, but others won't and may start petitioning to move it back. Squeaky wheel conundrum?

Change will force [those seeking parking spots to enter] northbound Lansdowne from the St. Catherine St. intersection, already a congested and dangerous intersection for pedestrians, cyclists and cars. This will use more gas (expensive), plus release more carbon dioxide.

Cars will detour around the park by going down Melville or Victoria. More U-turns will occur into driveways, across pavements, and the parking lots of the Westmount Park United Church and the apartment building on the corner of Lans-



downe and de Maisonneuve (another problematic traffic area). Think cyclist/car accident on Mount Royal.

Or will vehicles turn left into the congested *cul de sac* entrance to Westmount Park? There may be more accidents, putting pedestrians and cyclists at risk. Gridlock will occur up to Sherbrooke as the turn is across oncoming traffic.

Accidents happen now. It will get worse.

Council's information to residents states that there will be a loss of two parking spaces. I calculate four to six, affecting the Manoir, Victoria Hall, the park, the church, the dog-run and rec centre visitors, along with patients of dentists etc on Sherbrooke who also park here. Lansdowne is one of the few north-south connections between St. Catherine and Sherbrooke.

The 30-unit apartment building on the corner of de Maisonneuve has a 30 to 50 percent mix of tenants (vs. owner-residents), meaning many moving trucks park there and narrow the street exponentially, especially if parking is put across the street. Result = more gridlock.

Lansdowne sidewalks are narrow. Seniors, parents and children aren't safer shielded by parked cars spilling their contents onto sidewalks (think dogs, children, strollers, scooters, trikes, wheelchairs, walkers, equipment, etc) that block passers-by, forcing pedestrians out onto the road. It happens all the time as I walk up and down my street.

Solution: Move the cycle path to the east side. It will slow some cyclists down to cross over but it might prevent them from the risks of dooring since most use both sides of the street already.

Don't waste time and money forcing this change, thinking it will be better because ... it won't. It will be worse.

WANDA POTRYKUS, LANSDOWNE AVE.

AGE-OLD PROBLEM – MECHANIZED SOLUTION

Yesterday morning [February 4] when I looked out, I spotted a neighbour busy with

his snowblower removing the heavy load from his roof, above. I understand 21 cm fell on Tuesday [February 2], making quite a storm along with the gusts of wind.

ERIN HOGG, WINDSOR AVE.

MORE SALT, PLEASE

I am a 70-year-old gentleman. I am in good physical form and walk more than 8 km a day. Since someone has made a case for the poor dogs walking on the sidewalks, the city seems to be limiting the sand and rocks that it is spreading on the sidewalks, making them more dangerous for us people. It is very slippery.

Are dogs more important than humans?

JACQUES MALO, GROSVENOR AVE.

Editor's note: I am not aware that the city is limiting salt and sand due to the requests of dog owners or lovers. – DP.

REST IN PEACE, AZIZ

It is with shock and great sadness that I read recently the obituary of Aziz Kahli (January 26, p. 5), the owner of Cipan, the jewellery store on Victoria Ave.

I have worked in the area for over 30 years, a majority of that time on Victoria Ave. This wildly cheerful man with the eccentric moustache was often standing in front of his store, greeting whomever passed by and engaging in conversation with them at times. Always full of enthusiasm for life, even during several years of severe back pain (due to bending over while exercising his craft), he brought a smile to whomever he met.

Over the years, I have bought several one-of-a-kind beautiful items in his store. He would ask who it was for and then advised me what to buy, as if each piece was created for a particular person in mind.

Although we may have not known him well (in fact, I had not known his name until now), he will be sorely missed by the community.

Rest in peace, Aziz.

MARY HARSANY, CLAREMONT AVE.

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Poem

COVID-y Jab-berwocky

Lewis Carroll was a fine old gent,
A college professor with a literary bent
Wrote poems and stories that, we hear
tell,

Amused the people and sold quite well.

He invented a mythical beast for a
humorous reason;
One that reminds me now of our dreary
winter season.

A beast described with rhymes and
illusions

Drawing the reader to endless
confusions.

"Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe."

The Jabberwock was soon to be slain
By a beamish boy of no name.
"O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay"
The hero of the wondrous day.

And so we looked ahead from 2020
To a world of jabs in numbers plenty.
But the orders got lost and things got
worse

So we have to think again like the
historic verse.

EMSB 'optimistic' about Westmount Park School reno, but readying fall-backs

"Project managers at the English Montreal School Board [EMSB] remain optimistic that the extensive renovations which began more than a year ago at Westmount Park Elementary School will be completed in time for the 2021-2022 academic year," according to a February 9 press release.

The next paragraphs, however, outline "three possible scenarios" including a full move-in to a completed facility in September, an on-time move-in to one that is still under construction and a delayed move-in.

"Twas all a mither and a faken
Just a silly dream to think bebacon
It was a slope for us all to gither
Cause we've been sold a granplither."

Without the help of a Looking Glass
They didn't have the ball to pass
They fumbled it and set new timetables
"Soon" they said and other fables.

But the reality is we have been led astray
By our leaders who went out to pay
Huge sums for jabs that never arrive
Jabs we felt would keep us alive.

They should have gone and just played
hockey
But they stood there and gave us
Jab-bertalky.

Michael St. B. Harrison lives on Mountain Ave.



Westmount Park School on February 11.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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Centre Greene weathers the pandemic storm

MARTIN C. BARRY

In spite of the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic almost everywhere over the past year, the board and management at Centre Greene managed to keep their heads above water and guided the community centre to finishing the year in reasonably sound financial shape.

“To say we’ve been tested this year is certainly an understatement,” Centre Greene board president Jane Wightman said on February 4 during its annual general meeting, which took place for the first time as a Zoom teleconference.

“It’s certainly no exaggeration to say that the past year has been like no other,” added Gerard Fellerath, the centre’s treasurer.

Centre Greene has been physically clos-

ed since the middle of last March as a result of COVID-19 safety regulations put in place by the provincial government. Only Terre des Enfants, a daycare that rents space, has remained open throughout the crisis.

Since last year, according to information on Centre Greene’s website, the centre has been trying to re-open, “taking a cautious approach,” with strict safety protocols in place to gradually resume programs.

The centre has transitioned to holding some activities such as Art Hive and Tea & Talk virtually through Zoom teleconferences, while others such as Seniors’ Fitness Tai Chi were sometimes being held outdoors in Centre Greene’s side garden as well as online.

Last September, when the government began to loosen restrictions, Centre

Greene started allowing groups that rent rooms to resume their activities. However, since January only groups attached to schools are using the facilities.

As Fellerath pointed out, revenue sources changed dramatically and it became necessary to develop new ways of managing the centre remotely.

Still, he added, “We have actually survived the year remarkably well, considering the challenges, thanks to the flexibility and the hard work of our administrative staff and the generous donations from our supporters, as well as increased financial help. Through government programs, the centre has weathered the year in very good financial shape.”

Although Fellerath said the new budget “showed a significant shortfall” versus revenues for the coming year, he added that since tabling it “we’ve received assurances of some additional generous donations which will to a large extent cover the shortfall.”



“To say we’ve been tested this year is certainly an understatement,” Centre Greene board president Jane Wightman said during the centre’s 2021 AGM on February 4.

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He is very healthy, up to date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped. Cash’s identification number is 46100803, and you can refer to it when you visit the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com and fill out the adoption application for him on the attached link. Once submitted, you will then be contacted within 24 hours for a telephone interview, followed by a visit by appointment at the SPCA.

Your neighbour, Lysanne

Orangette, a sweet marmalade cat



I couldn’t stop myself, that name is hilarious but says it all! Orangette is the perfect orange marmalade cat that we look forward to at home, snoozing near the kitchen on a window sill until someone heads for the fridge and then instant companionship for the hungry.

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up to date with her inoculations, spayed, and microchipped. She is waiting for her new adoptive family at the Montreal SPCA cattery. Please be the one to take her home and cherish her for her classic beauty and most affectionate playful personality!

Orangette’s identification number is 46307711, and you can refer to it when you visit the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com and fill out the adoption application for her on the attached link. Once submitted, you will then be contacted within 24 hours for a telephone interview, followed by a visit by appointment at the SPCA.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne



Carnival’s challenge participation not what expected

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The weather was probably the best in many years for the city’s winter carnival, with mild temperatures and “tons of snow, just perfect for making snowmen and getting outside,” explained Sports and Recreation director Dave Lapointe.

But for some reason, and despite publicity, residents did not seem interested in participating in what was planned as the “Carnival Challenge” February 3 to photograph their outdoor activities and submit them to the city’s websites, he said.

“It’s not what we expected,” he said. “We

received only three submissions and all came from the same Cimesa family.”

“It’s disappointing because we were trying to get the city involved in getting people outdoors. So we’ll just have to chalk it up to another of these unpredictable unknowns during this most unusual pandemic year.”

On the other hand, the two virtual “indoor” events attracted more attention. A Groove dance event attracted 59 viewers while the Saturday night family movie presented by Community Events had 82 registrants to view the science-fiction double feature, he said.

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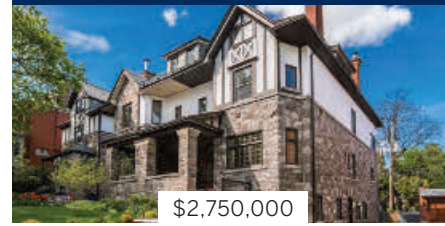
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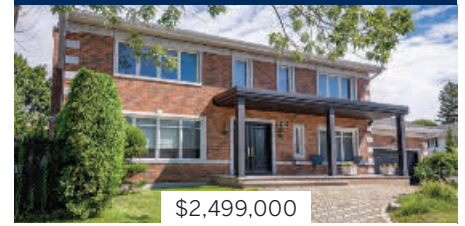
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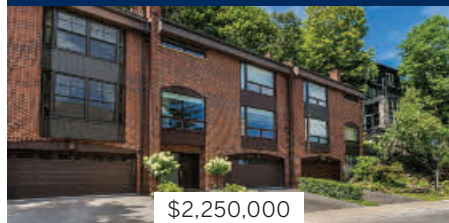
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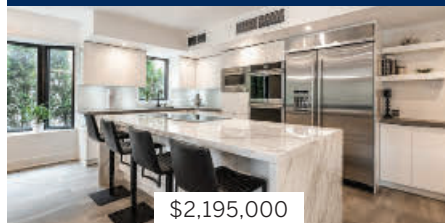
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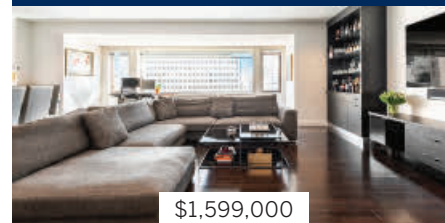
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HAMPSTEAD

Located in old Hampstead, this renovated family home is a must see. MLS 18265825

INTRODUCING

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PORT ROYAL - GOLDEN SQUARE MILE

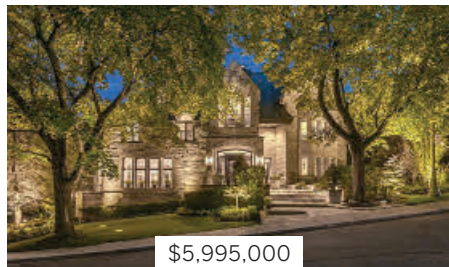
Breathtaking 2-bedroom condo in the Port Royal with southern views. MLS 18795267



\$6,500,000

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Mansion sitting across Murray Hill Park, 6+1 bdrms, inground pool & 4-car garage. MLS 26590203



\$5,995,000

WESTMOUNT

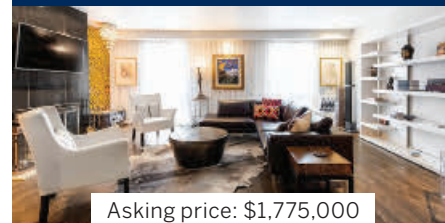
This architectural masterpiece features multiple terraces with wonderful views. MLS 18613192



\$1,995,000

WESTMOUNT

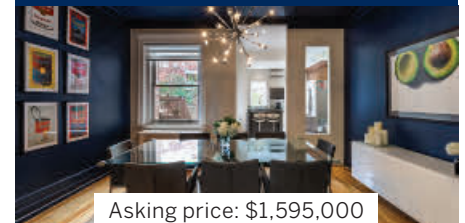
Renovated semi-detached home in the heart of middle Westmount. MLS 12890027

ACCEPTED OFFER*

Asking price: \$1,775,000

VILLE-MARIE

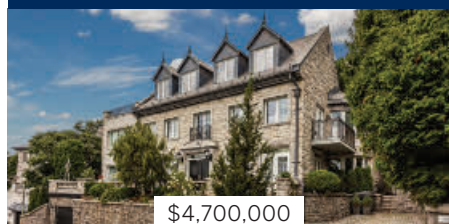
Modern semi-detached home with rooftop terrace and beautiful views. MLS 11459691

ACCEPTED OFFER*

Asking price: \$1,595,000

WESTMOUNT

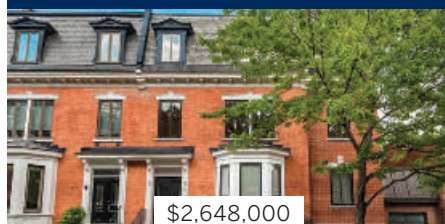
Lovely 4+1 bedroom rowhouse on the flats with parking. MLS 24565495

RECENTLY REDUCED

\$4,700,000

WESTMOUNT

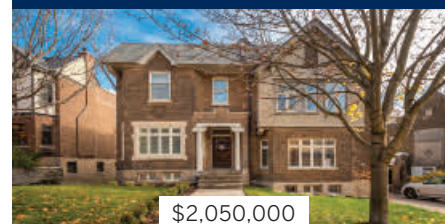
Georgian mansion boasting breathtaking views. 2-car garage. MLS 12657651

RECENTLY REDUCED

\$2,648,000

WESTMOUNT

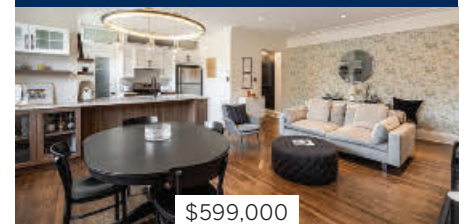
Renovated & spacious duplex, with lovely garden, elevator & 2-car garage. MLS 24488675

RECENTLY REDUCED

\$2,050,000

WESTMOUNT

Walking distance to Murray Hill Park, lovely master en suite & integrated garage. MLS 9001327

RECENTLY REDUCED

\$599,000

THE GLENEAGLES - WESTMOUNT ADJ.

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We all want to know more about COVID-19 vaccination



COVID-19 vaccination in Québec began in December 2020 as part of a massive effort to prevent serious complications and deaths related to COVID-19, and stop the virus from spreading. Through vaccination, we hope to protect our healthcare system and allow things to return to normal.

A VACCINATION OVERVIEW

Why get vaccinated at all?

There are many reasons to get vaccinated (all of them good), including protecting ourselves from health complications and the dangers stemming from infectious diseases, as well as making sure they don't resurface.

How effective is vaccination?

Vaccination is one of medicine's greatest success stories and the cornerstone of an efficient healthcare system. That said, as with any medication, no vaccine is 100% effective. The efficacy of a vaccine depends on several factors, including:

- The age of the person being vaccinated
- Their physical condition and/or state of health, such as a weakened immune system

THE IMPACT OF VACCINES AT A GLANCE



- The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that vaccination helps **prevent over 2 million deaths** every year, worldwide.
- Since the introduction of vaccination programs in Canada in 1920, **polio has been wiped out** across the country and several other illnesses (such as **diphtheria**, **tetanus** and **rubella**) have virtually disappeared.
- **Smallpox** has been **eradicated** throughout the world.
- The main bacteria responsible for **bacterial meningitis** in children—*Haemophilus influenzae* type B—has become **much rarer**.
- **Hepatitis B** has for all intents and purposes **disappeared** in young people, due to their having been vaccinated in childhood.



COVID-19 VACCINES

Are the vaccines safe?

Definitely. COVID-19 vaccines have been tested for quality and efficacy on a large scale and passed all necessary analysis before being approved for public use.

All required steps in the vaccine approval process were stringently followed, some simultaneously, which explains why the process went so fast. Health Canada always conducts an extensive investigation of vaccines before approving and releasing them, paying particular attention to evaluating their safety and efficacy.

Who should be vaccinated against COVID-19?

We aim to vaccinate the entire population against COVID-19. However, stocks are limited for now, which is why people from groups with a higher risk of developing complications if they are infected will be vaccinated first.

Can we stop applying sanitary measures once the vaccine has been administered?

No. Several months will have to go by before a sufficient percentage of the population is vaccinated and protected. The beginning of the vaccination campaign does not signal the end of the need for health measures. Two-metre physical distancing, wearing a mask or face covering, and frequent hand-washing are all important habits to maintain until the public health authorities say otherwise.

On what basis are priority groups determined?

The vaccine will first be given to people who are at higher risk of developing complications or dying from COVID-19, in particular vulnerable individuals and people with a significant loss of autonomy who live in a CHSLD, healthcare providers who work with them, people who live in private seniors' homes, and people 70 years of age and older.

As vaccine availability increases in Canada, more groups will be added to the list.

Order of priority for COVID-19 vaccination

- 1** Vulnerable people and people with a significant loss of autonomy who live in residential and long-term care centres (CHSLDs) or in intermediate and family-type resources (RI-RTFs).
- 2** Workers in the health and social services network who have contact with users.
- 3** Autonomous or semi-autonomous people who live in private seniors' homes (RPAs) or in certain closed residential facilities for older adults.
- 4** Isolated and remote communities.
- 5** Everyone at least 80 years of age.
- 6** People aged 70-79.
- 7** People aged 60-69.
- 8** Adults under the age of 60 with a chronic disease or health issue that increases the risk of complications from COVID-19.
- 9** Adults under the age of 60 with no chronic disease or healthcare issues that increase the risk of complications but who provide essential services and have contact with users.
- 10** Everyone else in the general population at least 16 years of age.

Can I catch COVID-19 even after I get vaccinated?

The vaccines used can't cause COVID-19 because they don't contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus that's responsible for the disease. However, people who come into contact with the virus in the days leading up to their vaccination or in the 14 days following it could still develop COVID-19.

Is COVID-19 vaccination mandatory?

No. Vaccination is not mandatory here in Québec. However, COVID-19 vaccination is highly recommended.

Is vaccination free of charge?

The COVID-19 vaccine is **free**. It is only administered under the Québec Immunization Program and is not available from private sources.

Do I need to be vaccinated if I already had COVID-19?

YES. Vaccination is indicated for everyone who was diagnosed with COVID-19 in order to ensure their long-term protection. Nonetheless, given the current limited availability of the vaccine, people that contracted COVID-19 should wait 90 days from when they were diagnosed before being vaccinated.

Québec.ca/COVIDvaccine

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Québec



Groceries in the air?



This full-looking grocery bag looks as though it was placed there on purpose. A delivery for a family of birds? It was photographed February 4 on de Maisonneuve between Victoria and Prince Albert.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Police Report Break-in, but no burglary, at Greene Ave. address

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Police investigators at Station 12 have concluded that the perpetrator of a break-in at a mixed commercial/residential address on Greene Ave. near de Maisonneuve Blvd. on the night of February 6 managed only to break the front door lock, but left without burglarizing the building.

Around 2:30 am on February 7, according to Station 12 community relations officer Adalbert Pimentel, staff on patrol during the night shift at the Stanton St. police detachment received a call from Westmount Public Security reporting that the front door of the building was open and showed signs of forced entry.

On arrival, the police officers confirmed the door appeared to have been forced open. They then proceeded to inspect inside, where they saw that the doors of businesses on the ground floor were closed and locked.

“They saw that the front door, the main door to that building, was forced,” said Pimentel. “But inside the building, the interior doors were all closed. There was no damage. Nothing appeared to be stolen.”

However, he added, on an upper floor where there was at least one apartment, the occupant reported to police that he had heard noise earlier down in the front entrance area. The incident remains under investigation.

Hyundai steals Honda

Video footage captured by a security camera monitoring an area behind a residential building on de Maisonneuve Blvd. near Clarke Ave. is expected to provide investigators with clues regarding the theft of a Honda SUV on the morning of February 8.

The car, which was parked in a space next to a rear laneway, was reported stolen by the owner. According to the time stamp on the security camera footage viewed by the police investigators, the theft took place at 6:57 am.

In the video, a suspect vehicle, a late model Hyundai Tucson, is seen slowly approaching in the laneway towards the Honda. One of two people in the suspect vehicle gets out, goes to the Honda and appears to be inspecting its vehicle identification number (VIN) on the interior side of the windshield.

He is seen returning to the suspect vehicle, which drives further up the lane and executes a U-turn. A few minutes later, the suspect gets out of that vehicle, returns to the Honda, gets in and drives it away. The suspect vehicle was last seen proceeding along de Maisonneuve.

Skis stolen

A car parked in an area behind a business on Victoria Ave. between de Maisonneuve and Sherbrooke on February 5 was broken into by thieves who stole two pairs of skis that were inside the vehicle.

As has become the case with so many reported crime incidents lately, the police have security camera images to help with their investigation.

The video footage shows a suspect leaving the area with the two sets of skis sometime between 7:30 and 8:15 pm, said Pimentel, noting that leaving valuables, no matter what they are, in plain view inside a vehicle is an open invitation to thieves.

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'Unforeseen' work on retaining walls

Sunnyside reconstruction studies get \$16k boost

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Plans to reconstruct Sunnyside this spring and summer appear to be moving ahead, likely to be good news for residents who have been waiting for the work to redo what many see as one of the worst streets in Westmount.

In a recent update on the project February 1, the city council increased a previously approved professional services contract to Le Groupe Conseil Genipur for engineering work related to geo-technical studies and preparation of plans and specifications for the work.

The original mandate of \$82,782 (taxes included) was increased by \$15,857 due to "unforeseen" issues related to retaining walls, Councillor Philip Cutler explained. As a result, modification of the contract "had to come back to council."

Sunnyside "is one of the major streets for reconstruction this year," added Mayor Christina Smith. This is the long stretch between Upper Bellevue around to Belvedere.

Its reconstruction, estimated at \$3-\$4

million and included in last year's capital works budget, was ultimately postponed to this year as a financial safety measure to defray the city's anticipated pandemic shortfalls (see story May 12, 2020, p. 1).

Risks and delays

"This is a huge project with risks and potential delays being on rock. So we have to be prudent," city director general Benoit Hurtubise had explained for the postponement.

Sunnyside, with heaves and humps and cuts in pavement, has long been considered overdue for reconstruction. While the east-west street was re-paved in 2014 from Lexington to Upper Bellevue, the remaining stretch was voted one of the seven worst streets in Westmount in 2015 in an informal poll conducted by then District 1 councillor Patrick Martin as commissioner of Public Works (see story June 30, 2015, p. 1, 4 and 5).

Snow ducks – gratuit



These snow ducks were being offered to neighbours and passers-by February 7 on Arlington Ave.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.



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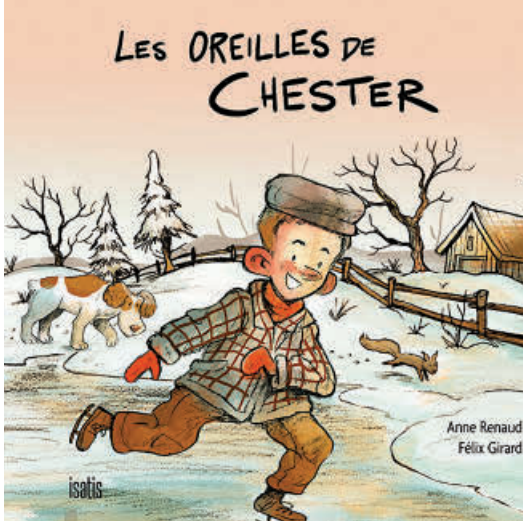
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A colorful illustration of a young boy with a wide smile, wearing a brown cap, a plaid jacket, and brown pants, ice skating on a frozen pond. He is wearing red gloves and brown boots. In the background, there is a snowy landscape with bare trees, a small wooden house, and a white dog with brown spots (Chester) standing on the snow. A small brown fox is also visible in the snow. The sky is a light blue with soft clouds.

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January sales: Taking a breather

Real Estate

ANDY DODGE



Note: The following article relates to offers to purchase Westmount residential dwellings that were reported by local real estate agents as having been accepted in January 2021. Because they are not final registered sales, the addresses cannot be made public, but give a good idea of current trends in local real estate activity. The graph at right offers a picture of these trends over time.

After a tumultuous pandemic year in 2020, it is not at all surprising to see Westmount's real estate market take something of a breather in January this year, recording only seven sales averaging \$2,122,857, with prices no higher than \$2,900,000. The lowest price was \$985,000, the first residential sale at less than \$1 million since last August, when one house sold for \$889,000.

The average adjusted price remained above \$2.3 million for the fourth month in a row but may climb sharply in coming months as supply dwindles. It appears many homeowners are putting off decisions on whether to move – or where to move – until they know a little more about the future of the pandemic.

With a few late arrivals to last year's list, volume for 2020 actually beat out the total number of sales in 2019 by two, recording 140 sales with prices ranging from \$840,000 to \$11,700,000 and a raw average price of \$2,334,767, some 17 percent above the city's valuation.

Then in January, two houses, one on Anwoth Rd., the other close by on Hudson Ave., sold for double their municipal assessments, while for three others the mark-

ups were less than 10 percent, pushing the average mark-up for the month to almost 36 percent. Once the extreme sales are removed, the average melts down to 16 percent, more in line with the previous year's average.

Condos

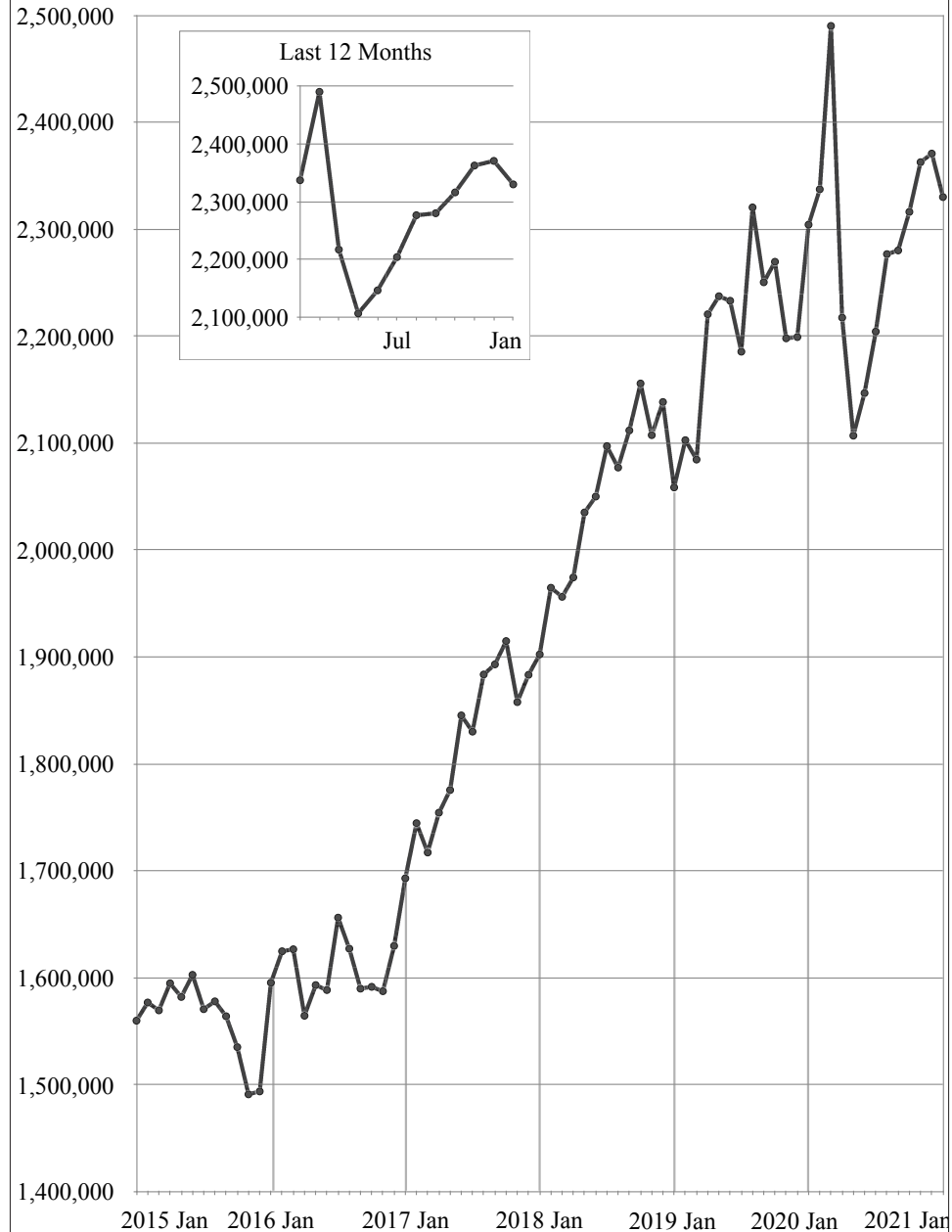
Only three condominium sales have been reported for January, in a very tight range between \$700,000 and \$808,000, two apartments and one in a converted duplex, two with mark-ups over valuation between 10 and 20 percent, the other selling way below its tax assessment.

Last year recorded only 36 condominium sales, the lowest volume since 2015, a figure which no doubt was influenced by the pandemic and the fear of shared living spaces. Condo prices improved to an average above \$1,250,000 last year, and may be moving back toward the \$1,050,000 level, where it had been in 2018-19; with only three sales it is still very early to spot a trend.

Adjacent-Westmount experienced a weak January, as well, with only one sale in eastern Notre Dame de Grâce, one in the "Square Mile," four nearby condominiums and one share of a duplex. Final tally of sales for 2020 shows that most districts had slightly fewer sales than the year before, but especially eastern NDG where only 22 sales were logged in 2020, compared to 37 in 2019.

The number of available Westmount house listings grew from 51 to 64 by mid-February, but that number is still sharply lower than at the same time in 2020, when we tallied 97 listings. The latest asking prices ranged from \$1,100,000 to \$27,500,000; the biggest price bracket was for houses between \$2 and \$3 million (22, compared to 18 asking less than \$2 million). There are also fewer houses for rent than at this time last year; already four houses have been rented in 2021, including one for \$12,000 per month.

Average adjusted price for 'typical' Westmount house, by month, January 2015 to January 2021, based on accepted offer dates



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We knew them when...

Some of the *Independent's* coverage of former DGs

Duncan Campbell: New man at the helm ready to tackle city's major issues

Coming 'home' to Westmount

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Re-published from August 19, 2008, p. 1 and edited here for length.

After some 14 years at the helm of Town of Mount Royal, and another six as associate director general of the Montreal megacity, Duncan Everson Campbell may be said to be coming "home".

While the professional challenge of becoming Westmount's next director general is his prime lure, the Baie d'Urfé resident has deep roots in Westmount.

It's here he was schooled – at Selwyn House. It was here his grandparents lived and his parents continue to reside at the family home on Forden Crescent. It's also here where his great-grandfather, George Hogg, served as mayor 80 years ago.

And his long association with the community is a fundamental link for the man who will become Westmount's first director general in memory to assume the role from the outside, with the exception of Manley Schultz, who served in an interim capacity to groom Bruce St. Louis for the position some two decades ago.

"I'm very honoured to have been selected," Campbell says.

The challenge, he says, "is to maintain and enhance Westmount's quality services at a reasonable rate at a time it faces a number of issues."

It's also a timely opportunity to move the city forward after consolidating the changes resulting from the recent signing of Bill 22, which addressed a number of the reconstituted cities' grievances, he explains. "I understand the issues facing municipalities."

Indeed, having experienced "all the growing pains" of creating the big new Montreal and overseeing its 11 West Island boroughs, and then working through the demerger process and Bill 22, Campbell brings with him a wide network of contacts.

Asked why he chose to seek the Westmount position, he said that given the knowledge he already had of the city's operation and its reputation, "who would want to pass up an opportunity in a city of the quality of Westmount?"

He's also looking forward to being in a smaller municipality once again "which is closer to citizens."

Named August 10 by Mayor Karin Marks to succeed retiring director general Bruce St. Louis effective September 29, Campbell, 56, is slated to be officially appointed at the August 25 council meeting on a four-year contract – "renewable", he adds.

Gearing up to take over

While he's not yet on duty, it's evident that Campbell's mind has already shifted into his new role.

"There are a number of issues confronting Westmount in long-term planning for which I'll be formulating a plan. It's important for a community that a vision is put out there and discussed (by the council), and our role (as administrators) is to see that the best information is available to them.

"A smooth transition will be getting to know people because we're dealing with human beings. My priority will be getting to know and understand the council, the



At his first council meeting October 8, 2008 as Westmount's director general, Duncan Campbell (centre) shares an entertaining moment with Lucille Angers of the city clerk's office, since retired. At left is then city clerk Mario Gerbeau.

organization, key players and also the residents."

His philosophy, he says, "is that we (the staff) should be there to inform citizens. Some phone because they may only need someone to talk to (about their concerns). It's important that all our services are geared to that – customer service."

Campbell's arrival just as next year's budget is being prepared is also timely. "The budget process is a good way to understand how a city should run and should reflect that," he explains.

No stranger to Westmount's city hall, Campbell has attended a number of work-related meetings there especially when TMR and Westmount were partners in the six-city mutual aid fire system and radio communications system.

He is a past president of the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators, the Dunany Golf & Country Club in LaChute, the Selwyn House Old Boys' Association and continues to serve as a director of the Weredale Foundation.

A ski instructor at Mont Tremblant for more than 10 years, Campbell and his wife, Barbara, have a 23-year-old son, Rob.

After growing up in TMR, he pursued civil engineering at Carleton University in Ottawa, working summers with the Canadian National Railway. On graduation in 1974, he joined its construction arm working "all over Quebec" and quickly gaining fluency in French.

He obtained an MBA in 1984 at the Uni-

versity of Western Ontario and left CN in 1988 when hired by TMR mayor Vera Danyluk as the director of operations and, nine months later, the director general.

Among major management strategies undertaken during his tenure, he lists the development of a strategic plan for the community with citizens, community leaders, the council and employees.

He joined Montreal in September 2001 just prior to the forced mergers. In 2003, he assumed project management of the \$53-million Oracle-based computer program for new financial, purchasing and human resources processes. January last year, he was mandated to coordinate initiatives to generate a reduction of \$300 million and 1,000 positions by 2009.

His proudest achievement?

"As a DG, maybe one of my proudest moments was the Ice Storm in January 1998, not so much for what I did, but the way we in TMR responded and with the level of creativity." Faced with an emergency without a rule book to follow "speaks volumes," he says. "And we did really well."

In fact, he says, one of his early visits in Westmount will be to the police and fire stations to forge close cooperation with these frontline responders.

And again, it comes back to Campbell's priority of getting to know people: those who make the city work, and those who make up the community whose reputation, like his own, preceded his arrival.

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Westmount's director general cited for integrity and respect

Bruce St. Louis to retire

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

*Re-published from January 30, 2008, p. 1
and edited here for length*

After 15 years at the helm of Westmount, Bruce St. Louis planned to inform members of city council on Monday that he intends to wind down his 33-year career in the coming months.

He plans to stay on as director general until a new candidate can be found and brought “fully up to speed.”

St. Louis, 54, has managed the city through some of its most tumultuous times, always buoyed by the next challenge regardless of its magnitude.

“It was never a job,” he said. “It was an adventure.”

Stayed on for transition

Eligible to retire in 2004, St. Louis often said he would stay to steer the city through its demerger process from Montreal. “We now have a strong management team in place, and this is the right time,” he told the *Westmount Independent*.

His pending retirement, however, will certainly be a bittersweet departure.

“The respect he has from council, citizens and staff will leave us with a huge hole that will take a while to fill,” said Mayor Karin Marks.

‘Incredibly loyal’

“We have in Bruce someone who is incredibly loyal, has loved the city as much or more than some residents, and knows every department inside out. In typical Bruce fashion, he has given us plenty of notice to ensure the transition is completely manageable. It’s in keeping with his integrity and devotion.”

St. Louis said he would stay on for “as long as it takes” to share his knowledge with a successor. “I will not leave until everyone is comfortable.” He has a target date of September.

His perpetual optimism and positive attitude has been his hallmark, Marks said. “I call him the ‘can-do reactor’ because he

always says, ‘I’m sure we can figure out a way to do that.’”

St. Louis bore the brunt of managing Westmount during the merger years with Montreal, often finding himself pitted between conflicting directives from his two masters, the borough and the mega-city.

But early on, he learned the dynamics of municipal politics, recognizing and respecting the role of the council as policy makers. In turn, successive councils appreciated his candor and opinion, which he was rarely shy in expressing.

The projects in which he takes the greatest pride were the completion of the refurbishment of Westmount Public Library and, organizationally, the creation of the Protective Services department that combined the Westmount Fire Brigade and the Public Security Unit.

Other milestones in his mandate included the renovation of the Protective Services building, the restoration of the lawn bowling clubhouse and the underground electrical substation, management of the Ice Storm emergency and the extensive Y2K preparations – “so much work, so little outcome,” he recalled.

St. Louis served his entire career with the city, beginning September 1975 as a civil engineer in Public Works straight out of McGill.

As such, he never lost the desire to be hands-on. As director general, he thrived on appearing at a fire scene in the middle of the night in his fire gear, never deterred by the drive in from his home.

He made a point of helping at Family Day with the children’s races and carnival booths. He also cooked hamburgers at the Canada Day celebrations and the staff barbecue. He chose to personally proof read reports to the public and to prepare important project reports requested by the council.

His experience in both the operations



Then director general Bruce St. Louis, centre, on August 27, 2007 with Westmount’s then city clerk Mario Gerbeau at the latter’s first city council meeting. Then assistant director general and HR director Alan Kulaga is at left.

and services branches of the city, along with his work with successive councillors, served him well.

But it was his appointment as director of Westmount Light & Power in 1986 that allowed him to shine. “It changed my career,” he said. The position, which some emerging city managers might take as meaning exclusion from the action at city hall, instead helped bring out his skills and resourcefulness.

He impressed the council of the day by his business plan to update and expand the city’s utility to meet rapidly increasing demands for electricity while turning a generous profit. And his loyalty to the utility has continued.

It is with “the guys” that he has always chosen to sit during the city’s annual Quarter Century Club banquet for long service retirees and active workers. And during Ice Storm ’98, he was insistent they be particularly well fed and treated.

Known for an unwavering loyalty to his team, staff and those he believes in, St.

Louis has maintained an open-door policy and an enthusiasm that was infectious.

In July 1990, when the city council named him as the “heir apparent” to be groomed for the top position in three or four years, he said: “I just hope I can keep their confidence and be responsive to the community, council and the press.”

Almost everyone calls him Bruce. And because he spent his career with the city, it has been closely entwined with his personal life.

He was even described during one of his council appointments as “the fearless leader of a city softball team, which has a perfect record.”

Looking ahead, St. Louis said he intends to remain “very active” in the future. In that respect, he added: “Westmount is an amazing organization. I can’t be more grateful to the city for my professional career. And it’s thanks to the city that I can now look forward to pursuing other interests and spending more time with my family.”

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Past DGs, cont'd. from p. 1

worked for another 10 years as executive director of the Association of Suburban Municipalities (ASM). In this position, he continued working closely with former mayor Peter Trent, its president until 2017, and then with Mayor Smith as a member of the ASM executive.

Both St. Louis and Campbell have carried out consulting work with the city since their retirement.



Community Profile

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Westmount's Contactivity Centre helps seniors. What's not to love? A morning phone call each day of the week. Home-made soup on Mondays. Arts & crafts groups. Online courses and a Valentine serenade with local school Selwyn House. Oh, and grocery shopping assistance.

Gentle readers, meet Emily Rill, program director at Contactivity.

What is your role at Contactivity?

I started at Contactivity Centre 7½ years ago. Throughout the years, my position and job responsibilities have evolved. I currently manage and coordinate in-house and virtual programming, and co-manage our online database and website. Each term, I organize various courses and workshop series, in addition to being involved with intergenerational activities, such as with Garderie FUN Academy. Lots of work and thought goes into what might interest our community and members.

How did Contactivity manage during COVID?

Since March 2020, Contactivity pivoted

Helpful in policy making: Cllr. Peart

Accessibility committee brings new insights to the city

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

After three monthly meetings and a couple of brainstorming sessions, resident members of the city's Accessibility Advisory Committee have started to bring forward findings of their own experiences as professionals, caregivers or citizens facing regular challenges in daily living.

The committee was created in October to advocate for the elderly and persons with disabilities (see story October 20, p. 7).

"I had the privilege of being invited to a meeting of the accessibility committee [January 27] and listen to the experiences of many of the members," the city council meeting was told February 1 by Councillor Conrad Peart, urban planning commissioner for permits and architecture.

"It was a great experience for me," he said citing one example of a discussion on the city's tree canopy and how it was linked to accessibility by its importance to caregivers as well as those they are caring for. This type of information "will help us with policy making."

Another, he said, was a suggestion that

Rill leads Contactivity's online push

to a completely online/virtual presence for activities. We do have volunteers in the community offering grocery shopping services for seniors, and our outreach worker has been busy with assisting people by phone and occasionally in person, obviously while respecting public health guidelines.

This pandemic pushed us to have an online data base, which now allows staff to access our membership information with ease. I really wanted to keep our community and members engaged during this isolating and restrictive time.

We also strengthened our partnership with Selwyn House School and we are offering several intergenerational activities, which are very popular. The Selwyn House-Contactivity Choir just released its second musical video – a special Valentine's song, which can be viewed on Contactivity's website (see story, February 9, p. 10).

Do you work from home?

March 13 was our last day working in the office. I never anticipated that I would still be working from home months later! I really miss morning chats with staff and especially interacting with our members

in person. Now, I wake up and go straight to my "office" – aka the dining room table.

I read that many people have adopted a pet during the pandemic

It's funny you should say that. In early December, my husband and I were lucky enough to adopt a two-year-old dog named Luna. We found her through Associação Azores Dog Rescue. Since adopting Luna, it has forced – but I would like to think of it more as "encouraged"! – me to get up and out to walk. The fresh air has helped break up my screen time, which allows me to better focus on my work tasks. Not to mention that Luna makes guest appearances at most of our Zoom courses and activities. The best part about Zoom is seeing everyone's furry pets on the screen. Lots of "awws," and a wonderful way to bring on smiles!

Where was the first place you went after the winter lock-down ended?

Although I desperately wanted to go to Winners/Homesense, I thought I would wait a few weeks until everyone gets their fill. It's so tempting to buy new home décor items because looking at the same furniture, blankets and planters for an entire year gets so boring! We all need a refresh

to keep things interesting. All that being said, I decided to start slowly and pick up one of my winter favourites... a caramel brûlée latte from Starbucks.

Do you dress differently due to Zoom?

I certainly do! I like to think of my COVID work attire as appropriately comfortable. I've been enjoying nice and cozy sweaters with sweatpants or leggings.

Do you enjoy using Zoom for all your activities?

I absolutely love seeing everyone on Zoom. It's so nice to maintain those connections and see those smiling faces. However, "Zooming" takes a lot more time and energy as opposed to in-person activities. On Zoom, it's my job to manage conversations, ensure everyone receives the correct links, troubleshoot the many tech issues, make sure everyone has a chance to talk, and always maintain high energy as everyone can see your mugshot – I mean head shot – the entire time.

Has grocery shopping become stressful during the lock-down?

I have to say that grocery shopping has become a very stressful process for me, not to mention that it takes twice as long as I

Time flying by?

For those enjoying all the city-supported recreation or just taking in the beauty of nature in King George (Murray) Park, it may feel that time is flying by very fast.

Well, they would be correct if they were tracking time on the clock atop the lookout chalet next to the soccer pitch. The two photographs were taken one minute apart.



Taken: 9:36:56 am on February 9.



Taken: 9:37:56 on February 9.



often shop for my mother. I can't just go pick up something in the potato chips section! I now have to follow arrows and go up and down the aisles to get there in the specified directions. I guess it's good for burning calories. I must say that at times wearing a mask makes it difficult to function. A few weeks ago, I thought I was putting lemons into my grocery bag but in reality, I was leaving a trail of lemons behind me... how embarrassing!

PS: I noted that some services are also available to non-members. How nice is it if you live alone during these trying times to have a cheerful daily morning call or to learn again how to knit? Check out contactivitycentre.org.

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A tale of two Sandras

‘Friends in the time of corona’

**Sandra Hendlisz on
Sandra Feldman**

The pandemic has allowed ample time to ponder many aspects of our lives and especially our relationship to people, friends and all things social – for we are social animals and COVID 19 has dramatically affected our relationships with people.

I was chatting with my childhood friend Sandra Feldman, and we decided to review the nature and pathway of our friendship, and friendships in general. True friendships are based on people liking each other for who they are, the chemistry way beyond what they can deliver.

Oscar Wilde said that “anybody can sympathize with the suffering of a friend, but it takes a fine nature to sympathize with friend’s success.” In all, friends lift the burden from our isolated selves.

Student days

Sandra and I went to high school together. We lived in each other’s homes. Sandra was not only beautiful: she had a brilliant mind and was not afraid to use it. This was unusual in the 1950s.

As we got older, we went McGill and wrote term papers together. We had occasion to re-read a few of them recently and although one could see the inexperienced writers in us, we were amazed at our perceptions, interests and values.

Once we both married, I moved away; she stayed in Montreal. We both had children and our paths took different directions.

We were not in touch very much until I moved back to Montreal, a separation of about 20 years. Without the benefits of social media, keeping in contact was more difficult and besides we were then in our own life rhythms, which did not include the other.

About five years ago, that spark that connected us in our youth lit up again.

Sandra was a social worker, working mostly in psychiatry and family therapy. She has always been a social activist in a Canadian version of Saul Alinsky. During my absence, Sandra was involved in many different projects.

In 1971, Sandra and two other women wrote a manual, “Coming to Our Senses,” about environmental awareness for children. This manual sold thousands of copies.

Sandra’s interests in research led her to participate in a WHO’s cross-cultural study of clinical depression in four countries. She was invited to France to teach the assessment scales at the University of Mar-seilles.



From left, Sandra Hendlisz and Sandra Feldman on February 10.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

Throughout Sandra’s life, she has been a strong proponent of social justice. Between 1986 and 1993, she and her colleagues were involved in amending Bill 62, so that social work became defined as a health profession excluded from charging GST.

Films, undubbed

In 1987, the Quebec government proposed Bill 59 requiring dubbing of all non-French movies shown in Quebec. Sandra and colleagues fought against this law because, if enacted, most foreign and in-

dependent movies, which could not afford dubbing, would never be seen in Quebec. Only blockbuster Hollywood productions that could easily afford translations and subtitles would be available.

The public was informed of the dangers of this law by the English and French media. Thousands of signatures were amassed at cinema line-ups, stores, and schools. Sandra and her friend, calling themselves “*Les Amis du Cinéma*,” presented the resulting petition, which was then tabled at the *Assemblée Nationale*.

Lise Bacon, the cultural minister, with-

drew the proposed bill.

These events happened when we were not in touch with each other. Sandra was a working mother with three children at home. It was wonderful for me to re-discover what her life had been during the time when we had no contact.

**Sandra Feldman on
Sandra Hendlisz**

My good friend Sandra, recently 80, loves people. And even during the COVID plague, she excels at something so rare there is no word for it. With child-like

enthusiasm and good-natured giggles, she triumphantly announces another bond she has created.

Our Sandra has lived in many places. Everywhere she would meet people: academics, fellow teachers, neighbours, and would soon penetrate any reserve to get to know intimate personal details.

All were invited to her house, to share a meal, a drink, a celebration...and remain close to this day. So 53 close friends (who has 53 close friends?) made a surprise birthday video describing her kindness and generosity that they'll remember for life.

Writing newsmakers, authors

"I wrote the pope," she told me the other day. "He didn't answer." But other well-known respected people from the headlines and bookshelves do.

Sandra and I met in high school and became quick friends. There was more sass and brass then. And we both wanted to be writers. As it happened, my writings were about my clients in therapy, or about social justice issues.

Hers were to the newspaper, and to and about friends, and her participations in adult education courses.

I admired her warmth, her easy social abilities, and her prodigious energy. She probably can still swim a lake. Sandra loves learning, reading books, and somehow can talk about anything on your level.

So she will make a party out of the customers in the restaurant on a Tuesday evening where her hospital-administrator husband works as a gifted chef.

She'll cajole, beg and persuade people to join in as they greet everyone there. In

their condo, she has created a salon. She invites interesting people, serves copious and delicious food and wine, and offers stimulating conversations too.

Connecting strangers

Sandra, even during COVID, still connects total strangers. A psychiatrist friend of hers had a big birthday recently. His mentor in the US has significantly influenced his thinking and work, and has written widely. Sandra is currently reading his latest book.

Through contacts, she was able to locate his email and write to him. Her heartfelt personal note had her usual empathy with

just enough detail. "Would you please wish [my friend] 'Happy Birthday'? I know it would mean a lot." Sure enough, the author did exactly that, delighting Sandra's Montreal friend. Without imposing, she can somehow calibrate just how to request politely and make everyone happy in the bargain.

So my own Happy Birthday wishes to my ageless, talented friend.

Retired Westmount High English teacher Sandra Hendlitz is a former Westmounter.

Both Sandras attend the Congregation Shaar Hashomayim.

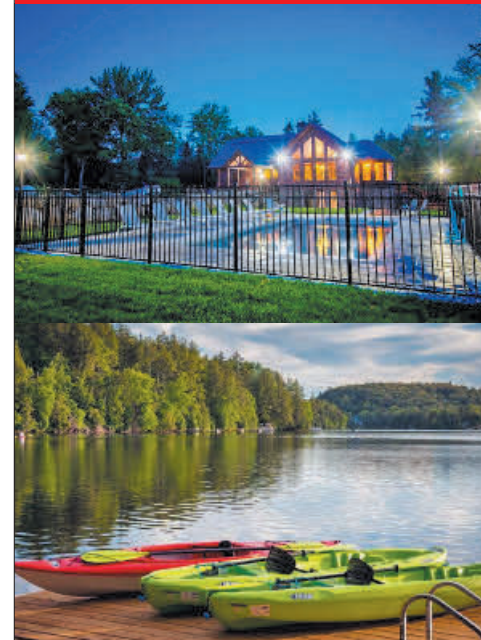
Mount Murray boarding



Frank gets some air at the mini-lookout in King George (Murray) Park February 6.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

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