

## Maintenance to close both WRC rinks for most of December

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The two indoor rinks at the Westmount recreation centre will be closed over the approaching holiday period, from December 9 to January 3.

This closure is required for replacing the cooling tower, a crucial component of

the refrigeration system (see story June 18, p. 6.)

The city's natural outdoor rinks at neighbourhood parks will continue to operate, weather permitting. Included among these are ones at Stayner, Prince Albert, King George and Devon parks as well as Queen Elizabeth Gardens.

*Council-refused permit for 17 Bellevue issued anyway*

## Council mandates legal action for restoration of rooftop without terrasse

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council November 4 mandated a law firm to initiate proceedings to restore the rooftop at 17 Bellevue. The council had refused approval of a requested permit,

which was subsequently obtained by the applicant in what the city had described as a mistake by the Urban Planning department (see story October 22, p. 1).

The recent council resolution authorized an esti- *continued on p. 3*

## Westmount remembers



Suzanne Guerin, president of the Royal Montreal Regiment (RMR) Association (Branch 14) of the Royal Canadian Legion, welcomes the dignitaries, guests and the large crowd to Westmount's 98th Remembrance Day ceremony on November 10. The RMR's armory is on St. Catherine St. next to the Westmount recreation centre. See p. 14 for more remembrance coverage. PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

*City to revert to conventional toboggan run at Murray*

## Natural splash-pad rink to replace Westmount Park's refrigerated one

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Be prepared for changes coming for this winter's outside fun. It will be back to the "good old days."

The previously refrigerated outdoor rink in Westmount Park near the comfort station will be replaced by a natural one by flooding the splash pad at Sherbrooke and Melville, Councillor Mary Gallery an-

nounced at the city council meeting November 4.

She also said that the toboggan run created over the last three winters using man-made snow at King George (Murray) Park will revert to being the "natural" sliding hill of yore.

While Gallery provided no reasons, Dave Lapointe, division director of culture, sports, *continued on p. 22*

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Look for the paper at our usual drop locations around town and, above Sherbrooke, at newspaper boxes at Côte St. Antoine/Victoria (north-west corner), Sunnyside/Upper Lansdowne (southeast), entrance to Summit Woods (at Oakland/Summit Circle), The Boulevard/Aberdeen (southeast), Montrose/Mt. Pleasant (northeast), entrance to Murray Park (Montrose/Murray), entrance to Murray Park (Westmount Ave./Murray Hill), The Boulevard at the Roslyn/Upper Roslyn steps (north side) and the entrance to Queen Elizabeth Gardens (Barat/Vignal).

Condominium and apartment buildings should get private-contractor drops of copies to their lobbies (not individual mailboxes).

Issues? Call David at 514.935.4537.

## Public Security helps young woman who fell on sidewalk

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A call for a woman sitting on the sidewalk on Sherbrooke November 4 at 9:08 am was answered by public safety officers, who found her near Mount Stephen Ave.

Described as a 17-year-old Westmount resident, she was reported to have stated she had tripped and fallen but did not want assistance from Urgences Santé. She was believed to have sprained an ankle and was driven home, Public Security officials said.

## 3 bikes found abandoned on Grosvenor

Three bicycles were found abandoned at the side of the road on Grosvenor mid-block between Sherbrooke and de Maisonneuve, Public Security officials said. Found on November 4 at 12:59 am, they were taken to the Public Security station on Stanton St. and had still not been claimed by November 7.

*Permit, cont'd from p. 1*

mated expense of \$50,000 plus taxes “to take legal action” for restoration of the premises.

Abstaining from the vote was Councilor Antonio D’Amico, who represents the District 1. He told the *Independent* that he would not comment “as it will eventually be before the courts.” He also told nearby residents of the home who questioned him that he had tried to reply to their inquiries but wanted to receive official word from the city.

He stated they had already met with Mayor Christina Smith over the issue.

In denying the permit, the council had referred to an “unfavourable recommendation” against the project provided by the city’s Planning Advisory Committee (PAC). It was, however, discovered by neighbours, after the council denial, that what appeared to have been a city work permit had been posted and work begun on the project.

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## Correction

In a story on p. 1, November 5, the Hal-lowe’en Extravaganza held October 26 by the children’s library was attended by some 340, comprising four groups of 85. – DP.

## No Police Report this issue

The *Independent* was unable to reach Station 12 community relations officers last week. – DP.

**Letters to the Editor, p. 8**

**9 Lives, p. 16**

**A-dog-tions, p. 16**

**Travel: Lucca part trois, p. 21**



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# City’s fall flower show opening focuses on community

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

The city’s annual fall flower show opened November 6 with a reception at Victoria Hall that appeared to be filled almost to capacity attended by an estimated 200 invited residents. These included newcomers and community volunteers, as is the tradition.

“With this event, we hope to offer new residents a sense of the community spirit in Westmount,” Mayor Christina Smith said. “We also hope to introduce you to those people who make up the backbone of so many community services and events in our city.

“To our longtime volunteers and community group representatives, thank you for your contagious energy in making Westmount such a great place to live.”

She also introduced council members and thanked longtime city horticulturists Mélanie Bänninger and Christine Dupuis and the Public Works team, directed by Robert Talarico, for their work. Councillor Elisabeth Roux, commissioner of the library and community events, introduced city directors and assistant directors.

The show continues as long as the blooms last.



Left photo, Han Wang, right, and his son Yiru, age 9, a student at St. George’s, were among many newcomers and community volunteers invited to the city’s reception at Victoria Hall November 6 to open the fall flower show. The Wang family moved to Grosvenor Ave. four months ago from China and chose to live in Westmount “because the community offers so much for the family – and the library,” Wang said. Right photo, city horticulturists Mélanie Bänninger and Christine Dupuis provided information to attendees at the official opening of the fall flower show November 6.

## Greene Ave. serves as a backdrop for TV series *Plan B*

By MARTIN C. BARRY

There was excitement but also a little bit of annoyance among some passers-by along Greene Ave. in lower Westmount the week of October 1 as members of a television drama mini-series crew spent several days filming scenes, while leaving trailers and equipment parked along a stretch of nearby Stayner St.

The crew was there to film part of an episode for season three of *Plan B*, a televised fantasy drama series set in Montreal. Previous episodes of the series were broadcast in French on the Radio-Canada TV network, as well as in English on CBC TV.

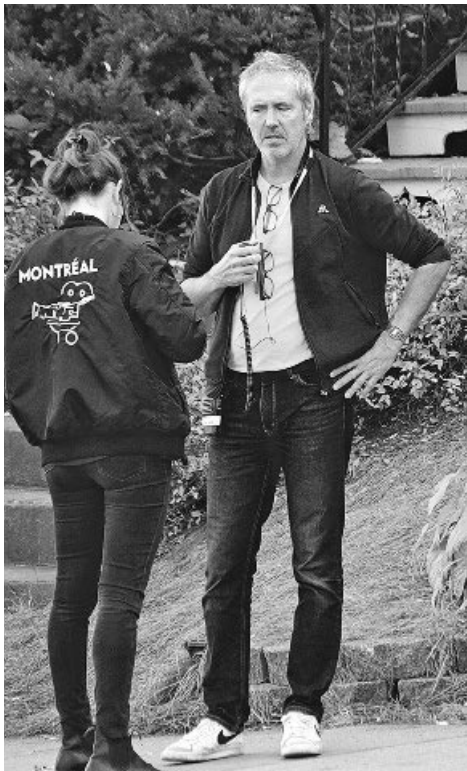
The show, which is an anthology with different narratives and varying characters, revolves around a mysterious agency that allows people to travel back in time to change their lives.

In a brief exchange with the *Westmount Independent*, the director, Jean-François Asselin (who co-wrote the original series, which aired in Europe, and directed seven episodes of the current series), said he was not aware whether anyone on his crew lived in Westmount.

“I wish,” he said with a laugh, while adding that he aspired to one day come and



Westmount fitness studio owner Val Desjardins (left), is cast as a pair of twins in *Plan B*. She is seen on October 3 outside Centre Greene between takes.



*Plan B* co-creator Jean-François Asselin (right) is seen with a crew member on Greene Ave. on October 3 while shooting scenes for season three, which he is directing.

live here. But as it turns out, there is a Westmount connection to *Plan B*.

Val Desjardins, who is cast as a set of twins who work for the mysterious *Plan B* agency, is the owner of Studio MTL, a personal training space located on Sherbrooke St. between Claremont and Prince Albert avenues.

The *Independent* spotted Desjardins on Greene as she chatted with crew members between takes.

Inside Centre Greene, centre director Heather Hodges said *Plan B*’s producers rented several meeting rooms in Centre Greene for three days as staging areas for make-up, costumes and equipment.

“They were going to be out there anyway, so we thought we might as well be accommodating,” she said, while noting that the centre’s regular activities continued as scheduled.

Although everybody at Centre Greene seemed to have enjoyed the crew’s presence, Hodges said some people passing through the neighbourhood were not as receptive.

While the *Independent* was photographing the goings-on from a vantage point across the street from Centre Greene, one man on a bicycle trying to make his way northward along Greene Ave. expressed his annoyance when asked by a crew member to take a short detour through the playground in Stayner Park.



## Winter line-up announced for Sports and Rec.

# Early head-start Nov. 19 for residents to sign up for activities

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

It's at 8 am online and 8:30 am in person on November 19 that local residents will have a first chance to sign up for the many winter Sports and Recreation activities being offered for youth, adults and seniors. Many of the hockey and skating programs and some fall ones have already started but others are now registering.

A full listing of winter programs and activities is included in the city's brochure recently posted on the Sports and Recreation pages of the city's website.

A program for the winter season for ages 9-14 years called "Greatest Broadway, Rock & Blues Hits" is scheduled to take place Thursdays, 4:30 to 5:30 pm, at Victoria Hall. It is new for the winter season,

according to Claude Danis, program and community services coordinator.

Among the many dance options for youth is "Breakdance" along with classical ballet starting at age 3, and hip hop ballet, all at various times.

Among other programs are skating instruction and figure skating at various levels along with power skating, indoor soccer, martial arts, drama for fun, yoga for kids and babysitting.

"Stay Safe" offers first aid and safety skills for youth 9 to 13 years.

### Pickleball, badminton

Included in the listings for adults are pickleball, badminton, basketball and workshops on self-defence for women and teens. There are a variety of dance courses

including tap dancing and theatre dance.

Exercise classes are also listed for adults with those for seniors also available on Zoom.

Despite the earlier start of most hockey and skating programs and team play, some at different levels are also listed. Ice time is available for general skating and hockey for the entire family at the city's indoor rinks, which will be temporarily closed December 9, 2024 to January 3, to replace the cooling tower (see story p. 1).

The Westmount YMCA also provides aquatic activities for Westmount residents at various times on various days.

These are also listed in the city brochure. Included are family swim periods Saturday 2 pm to 3:30 pm and Sunday 8:30 to 10 am.

## Don't need infrastructure replaced

# Alleyways to benefit from unspent capital works budget

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council voted unanimously November 4 to approve a contract for repairing alleyways by Les Entreprises Ventec at maximum amount of \$1,762,251, described as the lowest conforming bidder.

The measure was introduced as a new business item not previously mentioned or included in the capital works budget for this year.

Three alleys were pinpointed as being "in dire need of repairs" that can be undertaken without the costly need of work or replacement of infrastructure beneath them, at the end of this construction season, weather permitting, or carried over to next year.

They were listed as one south of St. Catherine between Abbott and Blenheim; one from Mount Pleasant to Elm and south of Holton; and one from Clarke to Olivier between de Maisonneuve and Sherbrooke.

The motion was moved by Councillor Conrad Peart as commissioner of urban planning and infrastructure, seconded by District 8 councillor Kathleen Kez and heralded by District 7 councillor Matt Aronson, who stated that he was delighted the city would be tackling repair of the lanes.

"Councillor Kez and I have been advocating for funds to be used to repair some of our lanes that are in poor condition," Aronson explained. The work is planned for this

month, provided the weather co-operates. Those that cannot be completed, are to be carried over to next year.

### Leftover budget

"In the last three years, council has stepped up its decade-long effort to repair and replace aging public infrastructure. When we reached the tail-end of the construction season this year, we had a small amount of capital works money left unspent and were able to look at some smaller projects that haven't yet made it to the top of the priority list."

Later, he said he was very happy "that we were able to pass a motion to fix some of our lanes," including the one in his District 7 that runs from Abbott to Blenheim.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

‘SHOEBOXES’ MAKE LARGE IMPACT, THANK YOU

In response to the advertisement titled “Montreal Chapter Shoebox Project Holiday Campaign” published October 29, p. 12, I would like to add a few things.

Anne’s House, a residence for women who struggle with mental health issues, homelessness and addiction located in Shaughnessy village, has been the very lucky recipient of these gift boxes for many years.

I have heard from residents that this is the first time they have ever received a gift and celebrated the holidays.

The time, care and thoughtfulness of these boxes is truly a labour of love. Kudos to Lora Tombari and her team. I am always touched when volunteers come forward, taking the time out of their own busy days to support others and, as a not-for-profit organization, we do depend on our local community and this is a pure example of community in action.

My deepest thanks!

SHEILA WOODHOUSE – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HADLEY COMMUNITY

UN AUTRE TYPE D’HALLOWEEN

Le service environnement de la ville de Westmount a récemment proposé une sortie: la visite d’un site d’enfouissement d’ordures le 31 octobre.

Je me suis dis que cela serait une bonne promenade « trick or treat » de Hallo-

ween... Nous étions une vingtaine de participants à nous rendre en bus sur le site de Enviro Connections proche de Terrebonne, sans doute déjà tous un peu conscientisés par l’enjeu des déchets. Certains avaient également visité le Centre de tri quelques jours auparavant.

La matinée est passée très vite. D’abord une présentation générale du site (environ 3km x 2km) puis une visite en bus des installations: la pesée et scan des camions (300 à 650 par jour), les bassins de décan-tation du lixiviat (le jus de poubelle), l’eco-centre, la zone de compostage, les cellules d’enfouissement, la production de gaz...

Il y avait beaucoup à voir, beaucoup à comprendre, nous avons eu des réponses à nos nombreuses questions et finalement trop peu de temps pour toute notre curiosité. Une surprise: la rencontre avec le fau-connier pour la gestion du contrôle des goélands.

Un moment fort (visuel bien plus qu’ol-factif...): le ballet très synchronisé des engins au sommet de la colline de déchets. Déversés, étalés, compactés, recouverts... Bref pour Halloween, c’était décevant question horreur, mais passionnant question déchets!

Une visite a faire pour continuer de Réfléchir, Réduire, Réutiliser, Réparer, Recycler...

BARBARA DUCHESNE, METCALFE AVE.

**Editor’s note:** For our coverage of previous visits, please see November 7, 2023, p. 24 and November 21, 2023, p. 18. – DP.

GARBAGE-COLLECTION CHANGES A SAFETY ISSUE

Letter writer Richard Dufour quotes figures showing that reducing garbage pick-ups from weekly to bi-weekly will save a tremendous amount of trash being sent to landfills. While this may indeed be true, Mr. Dufour misses one of the more important complaints that many citizens, myself included, have raised over the city’s new collection policies, policies which, by the way, were made with little to no public consultation.

Specifically, homeowners will no longer have their garbage picked up from the back or sides of their homes, but rather will have to haul the trash to the curb by themselves on collection days. This presents a very serious problem to seniors, or to those with physical impairments or those with medical conditions, such as pulmonary or cardiac issues. This problem will be exacerbated, particularly in winter, when hauling not one, but two weeks’ worth of trash down an icy, snow covered lane or driveway will be hazardous, at best, and downright dangerous at worst.

Yes, let’s all try to reduce waste, which makes perfect sense. But will a slip on the ice resulting in a broken hip, or a heart attack, or worse be worth it? So, to Mr. Dufour, I would say that while many of us embrace the change to bi-weekly collection, the overwhelming majority are vigorously opposed to the dangers that will be faced when hauling the trash down the driveway on a snowy January morning. The city must address this concern and, like the “Claremont Triangle” situation, reverse its decision.

JOE RUSSO, SHERBROOKE ST.

THE SUMMIT IS FOR EVERYONE – DOGS INCLUDED!

With reference to the “Save Westmount Summit” ad in the *Westmount Independent* September 17 issue (p. 7), I would like to point out a few facts. The rules pertaining to dogs at Summit Woods are as follows: Between November 1 and April 15, dogs can run free all day long; during the spring nesting season from April 16 to June 15, dogs must be on a leash at all times; and from June 16 to October 31, they can be off leash before 10 am and after 5 pm.

The on-leash hours are ample and allow people who don’t own dogs to walk through the summit peacefully. I visit the summit frequently during these hours with my dog, on leash, and it is always very quiet and peaceful. Dog owners respect the rules.

I would like to point out that during and since COVID, the summit did get trampled



down a lot. This year, however, I have noticed that there is a significant decrease in the number of dog owners and dogs at the summit.

Since the municipality has installed the wooden snow fencing in certain areas to block off paths, this will help enormously with the regrowth of the underbrush.

With the installation of these fences and the significant decrease in usage this year, I think we will see a very big improvement in the re-growth or reforestation of those areas.

The ad states that the summit was designed to serve the entire community. That includes pedestrians, bird watchers and dog owners.

I have been a Westmont resident and taxpayer since 1997. I have been walking my dogs on the summit for at least 20 years. I have always respected the leash rules as have the vast majority of Westmount dog owners.

In the last two weeks, I have stopped three cyclists on the summit. They were ripping through the paths. When we told them bicycles are not allowed on the Summit, they were very rude to us. I would also like to point out that there are a few “forts” that have been built up again in the last month. See photo above. The city tore them down two months ago but they have reappeared. My friends and I saw a parent with her daughter playing in one of them three weeks ago.

It’s people who wear down paths, not their dogs.

Let’s be fair about the use of the summit. It’s for everybody to enjoy – dogs included.

GAIL SKUTEZKY, WINDSOR AVE.

BIG BILLS COMING – SHARE WHOLE STORY, PLEASE

The 2025 to 2027 capital works program recently approved by council puts the city’s financial health on a path of higher risk.

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To provide the necessary cash, the city plans to borrow \$76.3 million over the next three years covering 60 percent of its planned capital works. This is a major pivot in financing policy but critically without council providing any insight into its long-term implications.

Westmount has no choice as it faces crumbling infrastructure way beyond its best-before date. If it had resorted to a tax increase to pay the bill, an increase for 2025 would have been around 20 percent – clearly untenable.

To date, council has provided no view of where all of this is heading. Are we now to see many years of continued high borrowing? The city faces a seemingly bottomless infrastructure deficit, the consequence of years of underinvestment. What is the magnitude of this deficit? How readily will the city be able to cover its future debt service obligations?

Re-building roads is not rocket science. How many times do we have to hear about roads more than 100 years old needing immediate attention?

Neither are buildings a mystery. Councillor Peart yet again pointed out that the upgrade of the city's buildings will require \$100 million by 2027. For the years 2024 to 2027, the city plans to spend about \$30 million. What is the timeline for closing the remaining \$70 million gap?

What about Hydro Westmount? Council for years has been alluding to major infrastructure updates such as for substations. So far, we have no idea of the financial scale.

This would all be a theoretical discussion if residents saw a game plan to get the city back to firm footing. It's missing.

Councillor Peart did however refer to one vague new revenue source – densification. But let's not kid ourselves. Setting up new revenue sources will take years.

This financial uncertainty will have a major impact on the quality of life of West-

mount residents, especially that of future generations. They will be facing big bills.

Westmount residents deserve the full story.

DENIS BIRO,

5000 DE MAISONNEUVE, NDG

### MASSIVE TAX INCREASE ALREADY HAPPENED – NO MORE, PLEASE!

RE: \$21M loan to prevent “massively” increasing property taxes (October 29, p. 1)

But council, you already massively increased property taxes: two years ago, my property taxes went up over 15 percent, and this year, up over 5 percent.  $15\% + 5\% = 20\%$  property-tax increase in two years. Seems pretty massive to me.

And accumulated surpluses (which I hate, but which meant Westmount didn't need to borrow money in the past) have dwindled (read: spent!). Guess that means budget surpluses will soon go the way of the dodo and loans will become a regular part of our fine city's future. Yikes. Just like the city of Montreal that's drowning in debt.

Dwindling accumulated surpluses + 21M loan = failure to control expenses.

Thank the gods that we don't have a new indoor pool to finance. Let's just take that off the to-do list, please, and get back to the sound financial management of years past. (I'm talking when we bought our house in 1994.)

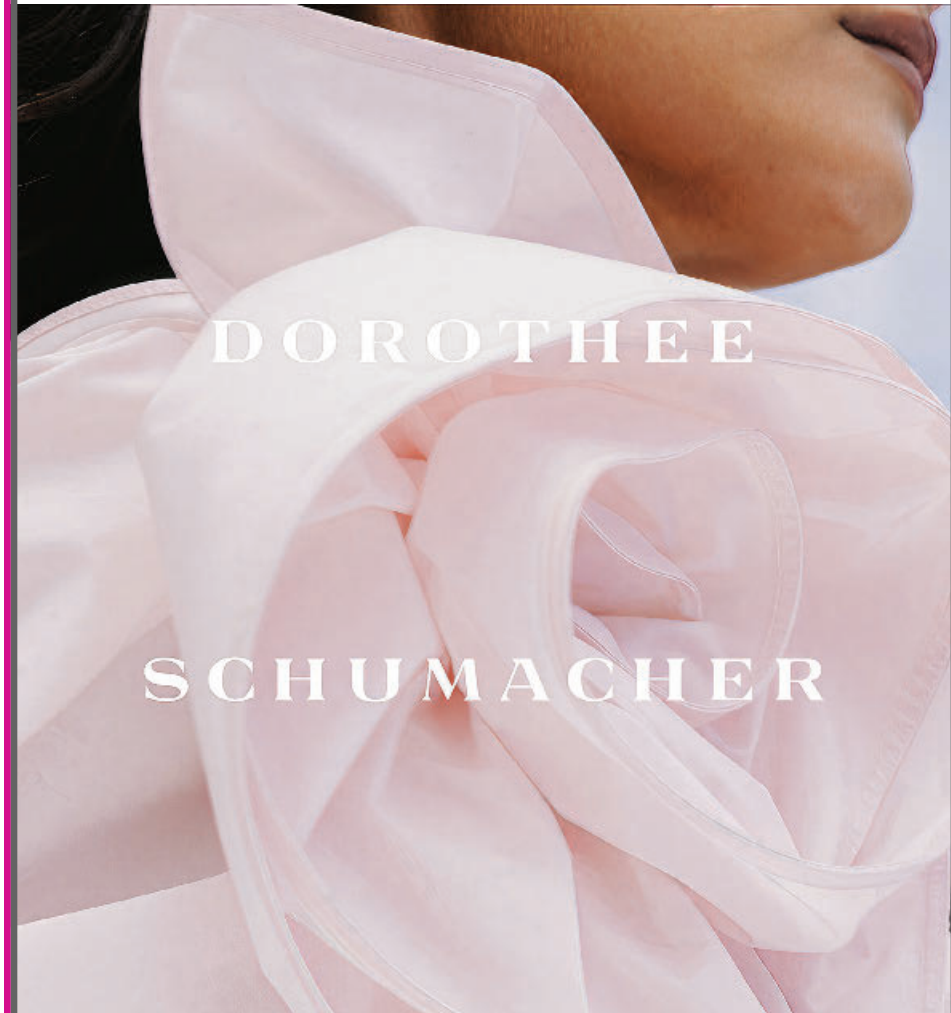
A last thought: if council cuts the half million a year that it decided to give to some homeowners to replace their water entries, then the city would only have to borrow \$20.5M (see how that works?).

I'm pretty sure there are numerous other lines that can be cut from the budget, which would mean no massively increased property taxes *and* no loan required.

Wherever they may be, previous councils must be rolling over.

THOMAS LAPIERRE, CHESTERFIELD AVE.

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Attendee: demonstrators tried to intimidate

# Pro-Palestinian protestors take demonstration to Shaar



Pro-Palestinian protestors outside the Shaar Hashomayim synagogue at the Metcalfe Ave. entrance near Côte St. Antoine on November 5.

BY JENNIFER BALL

Eylon Levy, a former spokesperson for the state of Israel, had a speaking engagement at the Shaar Hashomayim on

November 5 and a cohort of pro-Palestinian protestors was there to greet his audience members before he could.

Outside the synagogue's Metcalfe Ave. entrance, they wielded a megaphone to broadcast anti-Israel rhetoric and allegedly menaced congregants on the sidewalk.

### Injunction?

Given a recent injunction regarding protests at religious institutions, were they even allowed to be there?

On November 6, the *Independent* reviewed injunction 500-17-129079-243 dated October 16. It reads in part as follows:

"...ORDERS Defendants Montreal4 Palestine, Palestinian Youth Movement Montreal (PYMMontreal), and Alliance4 Palestine.QC, their officers, directors, agents, assigns, employees, organizers, mandataries, and any person having knowledge of the present proceeding

and/or the present order, and any person present thereon from participating in any protest or action related to protesting within 50 meters of the sidewalks bordering the following buildings until April 16, 2025, from the date of the present judgment...

### Police's view

The Montreal police (SPVM) were present on November 5 and Constable Mariane Allaire Morin from the SPVM media relations office said in an interview on November 6 that when police officers first arrived at the Shaar, "The injunction was not known but, right after, there were bailiffs [to enforce it]."

The *Independent* took photos on the evening of November 5, and police unawareness of the injunction might explain

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why protestors were on the sidewalk outside the Shaar entrance approximately 30 feet from the door and closely interacting with individuals on their way to Levy's talk.

"[The role of the SPVM in this context] is to support [the injunction] so [the police officers] explained the injunction to the protestors, that they had to respect it. Otherwise, everyone would have been arrested..."

"[Protestors] did stay on site, but they did respect the injunction and no arrests were made..."

"At 10 pm, everyone was safe and there were no arrests. They were protesting, but they were cooperative."

#### Attendee's view

One Wood Ave. resident has another view entirely. To her, the interaction with the pro-Palestinian protestors felt like intimidation.

She told the *Independent* on November 5, "As we were walking up the sidewalk on Metcalfe, there were two demonstrators carrying huge Palestinian flags. When they saw us walking towards the synagogue, they left their group and started walking towards us, literally to bump into us..."

"We just keep walking straight – we were not going to walk away – and at a certain point, we were literally face to face. At that exact time, security from the Shaar

told us to enter the synagogue..."

"The only reason that they left their group was to come to try to intimidate us. They have the right to protest. They do not have the right to intimidate."

Her account was shared with Allaire Morin, who explained that "If nobody filed a complaint, there is no file..."

"If something criminal happens, the victim must press charges and if they do press charges, there will be an investigation and an arrest..."

"At this point in time, I do not have a complaint about the intimidation, so nothing criminal was committed."

#### Speaker Levy starts on a light note

Levy told the packed room that "In Toronto, Jews were showing off about how Zionist and how amazing they are, but they did not arrange a welcoming committee like I had tonight!"

At one time, Levy was an outspoken critic of current Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and later a leading spokesperson for the Israeli government following Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7 last year.

He was suspended in March following a social media exchange with British foreign secretary David Cameron about humanitarian aid entering Gaza and later left his post.

## Eylon Levy's journey: From critic to Israel's spokesman to independent voice

By JENNIFER BALL

Eylon Levy recently explained how it is possible to go from being an outspoken critic of the government of Israel to speaking on its behalf, all within the span of a week.

He resolved the mystery on November 5 at the Shaar Hashomayim, which is found at 450 Kensington Ave., a stage that he shared with Stand with Us Canada, a non-profit and non-partisan Israel educational organization.

Levy is a British-Israeli man who served as official Israeli government spokesperson from the start of 2023 Israel-Hamas war until March 2024, when he was suspended as spokesperson after a dispute with the UK government regarding whether aid was or was not being allowed into Gaza.

#### Garber interviews Levy

Levy was interviewed in Westmount by Mitch Garber. Garber is a Canadian lawyer, investor and business executive who was awarded the Order of Canada in 2019. He is a co-founder of Optimal Payments and the former CEO of Caesars Acquisition



Eylon Levy inside the Shaar Hashomayim on November 5.

Company.

Garber refers to Levy as "the IDF" of the media world. "Fighting the fight that we need someone to fight on ..... our behalf, and really you continued on p. 19

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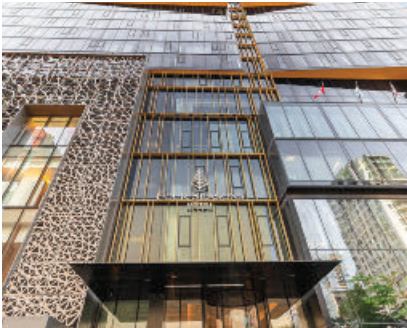
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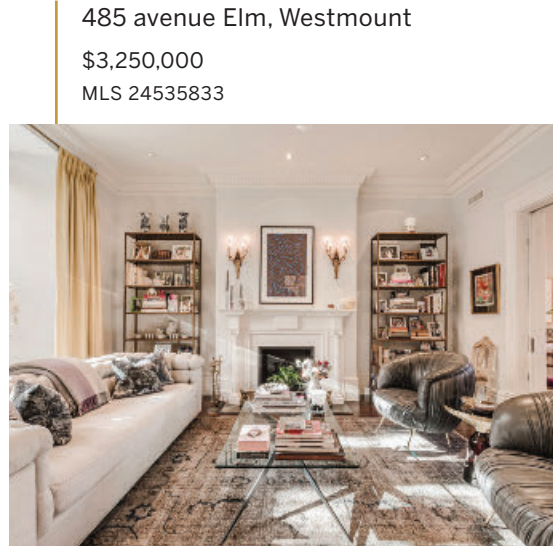


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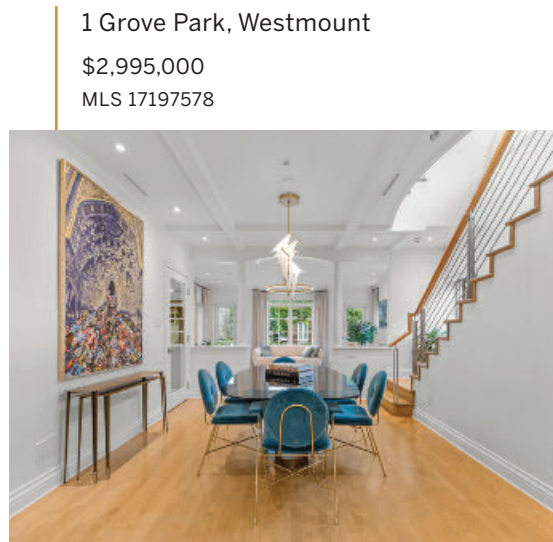
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Future husband was air force POW

# Wiseman remembers WW2 as CWAC veteran, worries about USA

By JENNIFER BALL

For one centenarian on the cusp of turning 104 years old, the world is undoubtedly a much worse place now than it was a century ago – and she fears that it could get even worse.

Jeanette Wiseman was born in 1920 in Moncton, New Brunswick, at a time when the country was recovering from World War I. The mayhem of the second took its toll on Wiseman's husband Bill, who was a Canadian pilot during World War II and a prisoner of war (POW) in Germany. He was detained at Stalag Luft III, which was a Luftwaffe-run POW camp that held captured Allied air force personnel.

The camp was established in March 1942 near the town of Sagan, Lower Silesia, in what was then Nazi Germany (now Żagań, Poland), 160 km (100 miles) south-east of Berlin.

Bill and Jeanette met in London, England after he was released, and they came back by ship to Halifax before eventually settling in Montreal.

She now resides at Place Kensington, 4430 St. Catherine St., and on October 23 she told the *Independent* that it is a mixed



Jeanette Wiseman at Place Kensington on October 23.

She goes to McGill University to listen to music on Sundays and in the last several decades she has audited courses there, including opera appreciation.

Professionally, she was a clerical worker who had access to top secret information. "I was in the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC)."

She contributes a strong sense of purpose to her extraordinary lifespan.

"It is your identity," she said, that propels one forward.

That and keeping your brain active. "I am a reader: mysteries and romance novels, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Montreal Gazette*."

### Fears for USA

On October 23, Wiseman expressed fear about Trump winning the US election, which he now has.

Her two daughters, whom she sees regularly, live in the United States, and she is very concerned about their adopted home given Donald Trump's unpredictability, she said.

"I am afraid of what is happening. I am afraid of two weeks from now," referring to the US election. She planned to stay up all night watching the results.

For this centenarian, the world is, without a doubt, a much worse place now than it was a century ago, and she fears it could get even worse.

It is shocking to her, despite a century plus of witnessing world affairs, that president-elect Trump holds such, in her opinion, abhorrent notions.

Wiseman viewed a recent tv news report where John Kelly, Trump's longest-serving chief of staff, said the former president praised Adolf Hitler while in office and put personal loyalty above the constitution.

"[Trump] admires Adolf Hitler and autocrats like Vladimir Putin."

Wiseman keeps up with the news on her tablet and by watching NBC nightly news. The former soldier – who had training to defend, protect and keep national secrets – has not lost her interest in world affairs.

Appalled by the state of the world, she wants to be a part of the solution rather than the problem, but lamented "I do not know how I would or could help."

### Centre Greene bazaar November 16

Centre Greene, located on Greene Ave. below Dorchester, is having its annual bazaar Saturday, November 16 from 10 am to 4 pm. Over 30 artisans will be selling goods and there will be raffle prizes.



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*Change-of-location challenge 'well worth' it: exec director Goldin*

# Contactivity marks busy months in new city partnership

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

While the recent move of the Contactivity seniors centre from its long-time quarters at Westmount Park United Church at the end of August was certainly “a challenge,” it was “well worth it,” executive director Benita Goldin told the *Independent* last week.

In what she called “a four-pronged collaboration with the community,” its new offices are at 310 Victoria, as well as many programs at Victoria Hall and the Westmount recreation centre (WRC) along with intergenerational ones at Selwyn House School.

It is a natural fit for the centre, she said, and called it “a win-win for all.”

## Now in Vic village, city facilities

Contactivity is also “thrilled to have joined the Victoria village area,” she added.

In the new partnership with the city, which otherwise does not run specific programs targetting seniors, even the catered weekly luncheons have been taking place at the WRC, as are two fitness programs.

“The addition of Contactivity’s programs in Victoria Hall and the WRC has



From left, Jennie Chang, Emily Chang, Westmount Public Security officer Julie Noiret and Chunrong Wang.

been successful to date,” said Dave Lapointe, division director of culture, sports, recreation and social development. “The seniors seem to be enjoying the new locations for their activities, and we will be

looking to sign a new contract with Contactivity for 2025.”

The city had signed a “facility usage agreement” with Contactivity for 2024. While this agreement is not related to the

city’s grant program for non-profit organizations “it will have an impact on the grant allocated to Contactivity.”

Community organizations that receive other benefits than grant money – like the use of city facilities – will be “weighted” differently when it comes to the disbursement of grant funds, Lapointe said.

## First WRC luncheon

Mayor Christina Smith welcomed Contactivity members to the first luncheon at the WRC September 19 while a Halloween one included creating “craft” jack-o’-lanterns along with Public Security joining in. The centre also held two pop-up craft sales outside and inside 310 Victoria facilitated by office building owner Barry Friedberg and its manager Nick Vriniotis, she added.

Upcoming lunch programs at the WRC include “Our Fragile Rights” presented by Royal Orr December 5 and the centre’s holiday lunch on December 12.

The Contactivity-Selwyn Intergenerational Choir has also begun practising for its annual holiday video to be released mid-December along with Victoria Hall as the new site for the centre’s art, bridge, canasta, book club and other programs.

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At nine months of age, Nox is very healthy, up to date with his inoculation program, neutered and microchipped.

If you would like to find out more about him, please refer to the Gerdy's Rescue & Adoptions website page at [www.gerdysrescue.org](http://www.gerdysrescue.org) and fill out the adoption information form [gerdysrescue.org/adoption-form/](http://gerdysrescue.org/adoption-form/) or enquire through the rescue's email at [info@gerdysrescue.org](mailto:info@gerdysrescue.org). Nox is such a darling young fellow, so elegant and full of joy.

Your neighbour, Lysanne



Westmount  
A-dog-tions  
LYSANNE FOWLER



Little buddy Jesse

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When he was a small puppy of six months – if you can imagine how tiny he was then! – Jesse was attacked by an adult dog and he is sometimes wary now, which is understandable.

As a small breed, we also think it best that he be in a home with older children.

Please refer to the Gerdy's Rescue & Adoptions website at [www.gerdysrescue.org](http://www.gerdysrescue.org), then fill out the adoption form link there or go directly to their [gerdysrescue.org/adoption-form/](http://gerdysrescue.org/adoption-form/).

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Please do not enquire through Facebook Messenger.

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Jesse is such a delightful fellow, please think of him.

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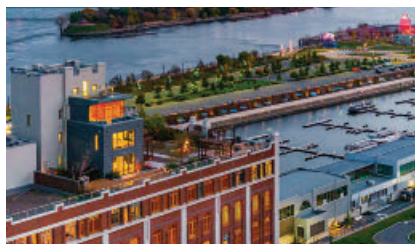
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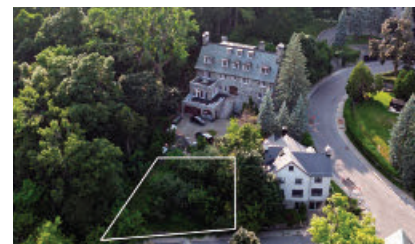
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Westmount Historical Association report

# Donlon Hurtubise examines the ancestry of the first family of city’s oldest house

By RALPH THOMPSON

The first of three fall lectures organized by the Westmount Historical Association (WHA) took place in the Westmount Room of the Westmount Public Library September 19.

The guest lecturer was Donlon O. Hurtubise, a retired geologist from Texas and a talented genealogist. He is a direct descendant of the Hurtubise family that built Westmount’s oldest standing house.

Both he and his sister Anne Pecora had travelled from the US to present at the WHA meeting.

Hurtubise opened by pointing out that this is the 20th anniversary of the Hurtubise House being recognized as a historic site.

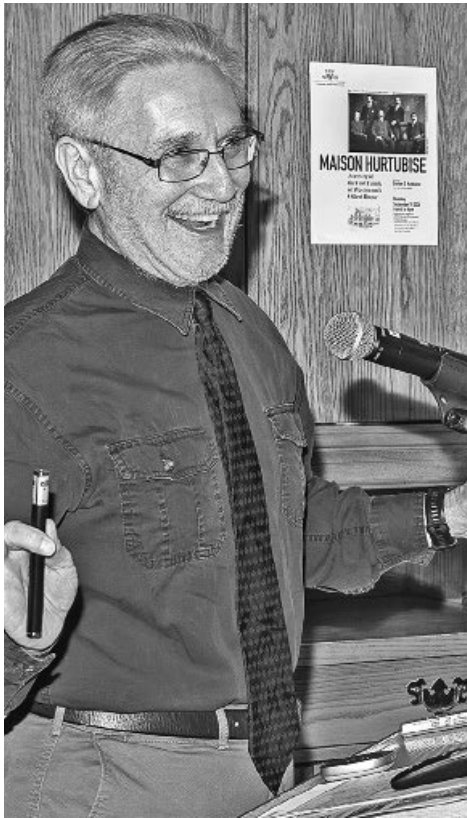
Hurtubise explained his use of specific data sources, including Genealogy Quebec and the Drouin Institute; the births, deaths and marriages contained in University of Montreal’s PRDH (Programme de recherche en démographie historique), the WHA archives and the most recent developments in DNA technology, which are readily available to anyone. They use Y chromosome to trace male genes back tens of thousands of years.

Acknowledging Westmount’s conservationists

Hurtubise explained the vital role that a number of people played in preserving the old house from demolition.

The last Hurtubise occupant, Dr. Leopold, passed away in 1955. The house was to be sold to a developer but C.J.G (“Jack”) Molson, Mabel Molson and James Beattie stepped in to acquire the property after Alice Lighthall alerted the media to the imminent demise of Canada’s oldest farmhouse.

Hurtubise also pointed out that there are two histories of the house, the older



Donlon Hurtubise of Texas talked about his family at the Westmount Public Library on September 19.

version being that Pierre built it in about 1688. The new narrative, produced in a report in 2001 by Stewart and Robichaud, states that Jean Hurtubise built it in 1739.

In 1653, Marin Hurtubise, Étienne Alton and Marin’s brother André arrived from France.

Marin and André were the only French immigrants with the last name “Hurtubise.” André died before getting married and has no descendants, “so all Hurtubise’s are related to Marin and Étienne.”

Doreen Lindsay wrote a detailed article that very clearly lays out the names of those

who built the house and the descendants of the first family, generation by generation, which enabled the presenter to confirm that he is a direct descendant of Marin and Étienne.

His fifth great-grandfather actually grew up in the Hurtubise house.

Links to history

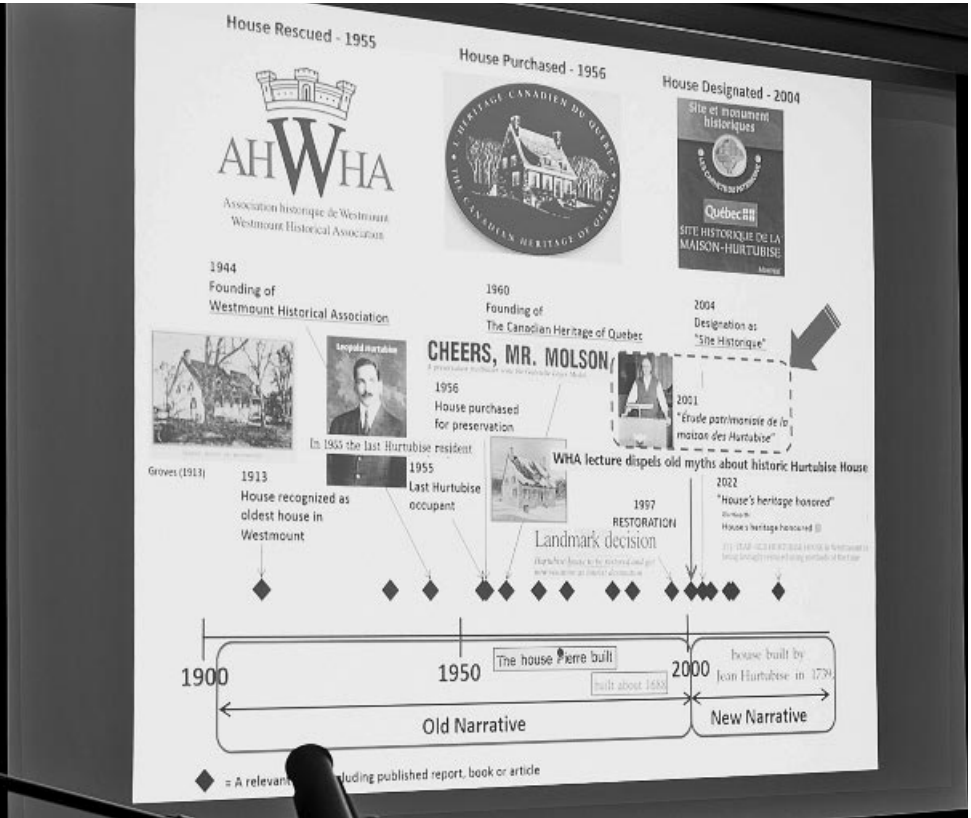
Hurtubise explained the importance of context in this story, and the connections of the Hurtubise family to many well-known characters and events in the history of Montreal and North America between 1600 and 1800.

In 1642, 40 original French colonists arrived in Montreal (then Ville Marie) led by Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve. At that time, it was a colony separate from Quebec City run by the Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal.

In 1663, control passed to the Sulpicians, who had the land rights. By this time, the entire population of the St. Lawrence valley was only around 3,000.

Lasalle, the man

La Salle, a French-born explorer, came to Montreal around 1666, acquired a seigneurie on the land of ..... Lachine including what continued on p. 19



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*Hurtubise House hosted many events in his term*

# Archambault retires as executive director of Canadian Heritage of Quebec

By JENNIFER BALL

Jacques Archambault has retired as executive director of Canadian Heritage of Quebec (CHQ) – a position he held from October 2009 until September of this year. His successor, Philippe Monteil-Kemys-tetter, has been named.

Archambault gave the *Independent* a tour October 31 of the inside of the organization's Hurtubise House, which is located on Côte St. Antoine at the corner of Victoria Ave.

He had only 369 years to unpack.

Brothers Marin and André Hurtubise came to New France with Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve, in 1653. In 1739, descendants of these two men built the fieldstone farmhouse on present-day Côte St. Antoine Rd. It was surrounded by orchards and farmlands that stretched all the way to where Sherbrooke St. is now.

Centuries later, the significance of the house was obvious to three concerned Quebec residents when they decided to save the *ancien régime*-era stone farmhouse from demolition.

It was 1956 and Canadian Heritage of Quebec was formed by C.J.G. ("Jack") Molson, Mabel Molson – both descendants of John Molson but not directly involved in the brewery – and James Beattie.

Canadian Heritage is the owner of 12

properties in Quebec including the Laterrière Mill in Les Éboulements, the Simon Fraser House in St. Anne de Bellevue and the Molson-Beattie House in Tadoussac near the mouth of the Saguenay River.

The greatest challenges Archambault faced during his tenure as executive director were human resource-related and financial, he said.

"To do everything that needs to be done – on the properties, in the buildings, to restore, to preserve, to maintain, to develop: you must do that with people – and there are not so many human resources working at CHQ..."

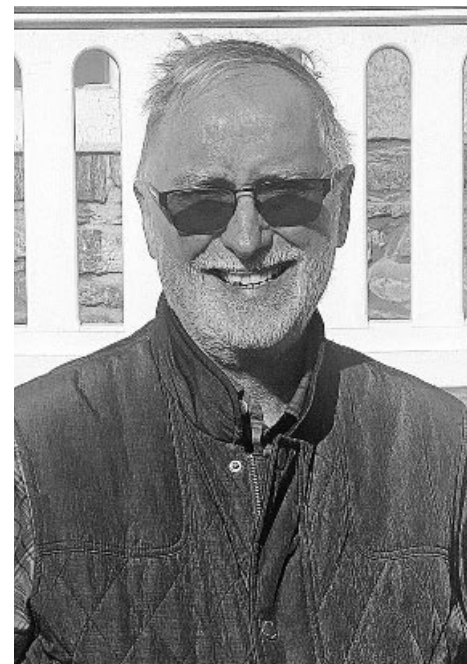
In fact, "There are only three employees on the payroll for the entire year: the executive director, the part-time assistant and a miller at Laterrière Mill."

The predicament, Archambault said, was to preserve and to restore the properties with mostly only volunteers.

The darlings of the Canadian Heritage portfolio call for a dollars-and-cents superintendency. For the past five years, Archambault says costs have ballooned for the work that Canadian Heritage does, including the cost of insuring the buildings.

## Cost-increase 'nightmare'

"It has been a nightmare," he said. "The cost went from \$30,000 a year to \$125,000



Jacques Archambault outside Hurtubise House, which is located at Côte St. Antoine at the corner of Victoria Ave. Photo taken October 31.

a year."

Risk analysis plays into why insurance companies have jacked up their prices, Archambault explained, even while there has never been evidence of a flood at Hurtubise House, to take one example.

And while Hurtubise house does not

have a preserved wooden sailboat like the Molson-Beattie House or a grandiose view onto the Gulf of the St. Lawrence like the Frederick James house, Archambault considers it the greatest achievement of his 15-year tenure at Canadian Heritage.

## Hurtubise work

"We did the last restoration in 2012 and since then we have had students come in the summer to open the house to the public and to develop activities like cocktails, lectures, exhibitions and to organize the archives..."

"We have many, young professionals doing [their training placement and internships] for communications, heritage sector, development work ...

"To have this house used more and more for different kinds of cultural development, heritage exhibitions and lectures was very interesting [and rewarding]."

Archambault dedicated 40 years of his career to working for non-profits in the education, social services and health sectors and he is not yet ready to retreat from professional challenges.

He told the *Independent* that he will turn 70 this year. While he is collaborating with his successor and he has accepted to join Canadian Heritage's board, Archambault said he is still contemplating his next career step.

have been that best single voice."

The meeting between Garber and Levy produced discussion on pro-Palestinian protests on Canadian campuses. For instance, there was a 10-week encampment on the premises of McGill University this year.

"Sometimes when people hear students speaking about what is happening on campuses, they might feel helpless," Levy said,

## WHA: Hurtubise house, cont'd from p. 18

would become the Hurtubise farm.

La Salle was an adventurer and went on to establish French territory all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico, where he was eventually murdered by two of his own men in 1687.

Hurtubise went into a second part of his presentation explaining DNA analysis, specifically referring to the y-DNA links and the male lineage. His y-DNA chromosome is essentially the same as the y-DNA chromosome of Marin Hurtubise.

He has had the "big Y DNA test" done by Family Tree DNA, the company that has the largest database of y-DNA data and he

"but I think the reason that they feel helpless is the same reason why they should feel so powerful...because no one else is going to reach these students if not them."

Garber referred to the pro-Palestinian protestors that showed up to the event venue. "You have a population of nine million with two million Israeli Arabs [in Israel] surrounded by 22 Muslim or Arab countries, and many people in they world

has been able to trace Hurtubise male links back 24,000 years, showing connections to France, Britain, Africa and the Middle East.

Hurtubise concluded his presentation with a summary slide. The appreciative audience had many questions, one of which gave him the opportunity to explain that the spelling of the name Hurtubise is "normalized" in many databases today but there are numerous spellings in France that may be derivatives of the same name.

WHA secretary Irina Nazarova thanked the speaker and the audience for participating.

## Eylon Levy, cont'd from p. 11

are trying to believe that they are fighting for the underdog."

Levy explained that his new job at the Israeli Citizen Spokespersons' Office – which is the project that he founded after finishing with the Israeli government – is focussed on strategic messaging.

"If there is just one message [to understand for a difference to be made, it is that] this is not a war between Israel and Hamas, or between Israel and the Palestinians, or between Israel and Gaza.

"Israel is under attack by the Iranian regime and its proxy armies on seven fronts..."

"This is already a regional war."

Garber asked Levy to explain how he became the Israeli government's spokesman, which he did this way: "When this war started, I was not a government spokesperson. The closest I came to government was to protest it every week..."

"It would have been unthinkable to be a spokesperson for the government..."

"Then the unthinkable happened and we were invaded by air, land and sea. In a single day, Hamas slaughtered 1,200 people and they took 250 hostages..."

"Everyone in Israel dropped everything and said, 'We are doing whatever we can for the war effort.'"

Levy had a background in media and had been the president of Israel's foreign media advisor. (The Israeli president is mostly, though not entirely, ceremonial. Actual executive power is vested in the cabinet, which is led by the prime minister.)

In the wake of the attacks, he said, "I am going to give interviews on tv."

He got a call asking him to be involved in a nascent foreign media department and then he was asked to be an Israeli government spokesperson.

Levy said, "Only in Israel can you go in a week from being an anti-government protestor to standing in front of a podium that says 'Prime minister's office' and try to explain your country to the world."

Born in London, United Kingdom, Levy attended University College School in London and University of Oxford, where he received his bachelor's degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics in 2013.

He moved to Israel in 2014 at the age of 23 to join the Israeli military during the 2014 Gaza War.



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# The Study marks 109 years, announces Chui as new chair

Ariana Holowko (class of 2036) cut The Study's 109th birthday cake on October 25 alongside one of the school's oldest alumnae, Miriam Tees (class of 1940).

"There's nearly 100 years between their graduating years!" said Sarah Binns, director of communications and marketing, when she forwarded the photo.

In other Study news, Westmounter Wendy Chui has been named chair of its board of governors. Chui has been a member of The Study's board since 2017 and currently chairs the advancement committee.

Wendy Chui. She is a senior partner at TD Chui Au Family Wealth Management and was recognized this year as one of the "Top 50 Women of Influence" by *Wealth Professional*.

Her daughter, Chelsea, graduated from The Study last year.

"I'm truly honoured to take on the role chair of the board at The Study," Chui was quoted as saying in a press release. "My mother instilled in me the value of giving over receiving. I'm excited to contribute to The Study's future and ensure that it remains a place where girls can develop into



From left, Miriam Tees and Ariana Holowko.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE STUDY.

confident, capable leaders."

According to the school, Chui is passionate about educating women and fostering girls' leadership. In addition to the many events she hosts focusing on

financial literacy, she also sponsors girls' education in the developing world. In 2004, she cofounded an orphanage in Thailand and has been a Plan Canada ambassador for over 30 years.

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# Thoughts on Lucca – Not your typical Italian tourist city

## Travel

VERONICA REDGRAVE



A guide to spiritual meaning?

The first thing that struck me arriving in Lucca was the silence. There are no crowds. It is a charming oasis full of ancient towers re-purposed into lodgings and restaurants.

If one is used to the soaring spires of Milan and ornate Renaissance-Baroque façades, here churches are quite simple. The most important church is the Duomo di Lucca.

Construction began as early as 1063. Amusingly, each column of the façade is different. A contest was held for their design, but the Lucchese decided to use all the artists' submissions – without paying for any. Here you can gaze in awe at works by Tintoretto, among others.

Outside, a labyrinth helped church goers to find a spiritual path. Today, it still resonates.

Meanwhile, on Saturdays, the piazzas nearby are transformed into markets: vin-

tage, antiques and garden fittings sit alluringly under tents.

### Walk or cycle (no cars)

As a tourist, you pretty much have to

walk or rent a bike. Much of the town is closed to cars and local drivers/residents have strict rules.

The town does not have the Uffizi (Florence) or canals (Venice) – nor was it the centre of an historic moment called the Renaissance – so great swarms of selfie-takers are rare.

Perhaps because of this, locals are welcoming. Lucca is manageable. There are many little piazzas (squares where streets meet); but GPS is helpful as street signs are a tad rare.

Small family-owned bars offer *apéros* and often comfy cushions so you can sit outside at neighbouring buildings' stone medieval "ledges" once used by those waiting to state their case to the town VIP.

### Walls & gates

And, of course, a main attraction is Lucca's walls, which surround the city. They are among the best-preserved Renaissance fortifications in Europe. The earliest gate through the walls, ..... Porta San Pietro, dates ..... *continued on p. 22*

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Travel, cont'd from p. 21

from 1565. Successive gates were opened in 1592 (San Maria) and 1639 (San Donato).

In 1811, Elisa Napoleon Baciocchi – duchess of Lucca due to her brother Napoleon, who gifted her the city – made a *buco* (hole) through the walls for another entrance, called – you guessed it – Porta Elisa.

In total, there are six gates. The walls are a series of earthwork battlements, built to replace earlier medieval and Roman structures. They play a pivotal role in the city's identity, a monument to its long-standing as a republic, fighting for years against eager encroachments from Florence and Pisa.

Centuries later, traffic was allowed on the walls but a wise mayor in the 1980s carefully re-instated the pedestrian path, today lined with elm, oak and plane trees.

Curiously, as they were initially military, the walls were once owned by Rome, but the Lucchese bought them back.

During COVID they were completely closed. Today, they are a magnet for all.



Basilica of San Frediano: 13th century mosaic; typical Romanesque Lucca characteristics.



San Michele in Foro. Built over a Roman forum: 13th century façade; 21st century art.

**Correction:**  
**Toboggan run still costs only \$123K**

In a story November 12, p. 1 (“City to revert to conventional toboggan run at Murray”), the story’s turn on p. 22 should have listed the cost of the contract for 2022-2023 as having been some \$123,000, to which an additional zero had inadvertently been added, for the second time (see also November 15, 2022, p. 6). We will work to do better! – DP.

Even snails love coffee!



This Westmount resident, lower centre, was working its way up this coffee cup on St. Catherine near Redfern November 1. PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

First glove of winter?



As seen on Chesterfield Ave. near Victoria on October 23. PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Winter fun, cont'd from p. 1

recreation and social development, told the *Independent* that both these changes were in part due to cost-cutting.

“But not the main reason,” he added.

The Westmount Park rink “causes a lot of damage, which is costly to repair and makes the area unusable for most of the summer.”

On the hill at Murray Park, trees were damaged by the blowing of snow and it takes much longer for the snow to melt in the spring.

COVID origins

Both the man-made toboggan run and the refrigerated rink had been created over COVID to provide more outdoor activities.

The contract for creating and maintaining the toboggan run has cost more than \$1,200,000 a winter (see story November 8, 2022, p. 1).

Meanwhile, the two indoor rinks at the WRC will be closed over the approaching holiday period December 9, 2024, to January 3, 2025. See story on p. 1.

Four shades of white



White pumpkin, white house, white building, white-ish car. As seen November 1 on St. Catherine near Abbott. PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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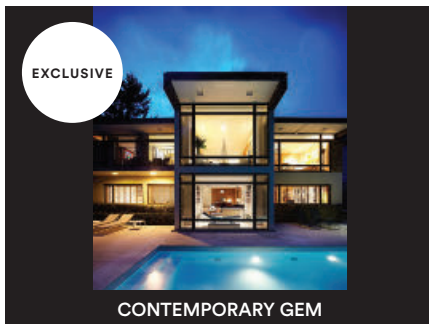




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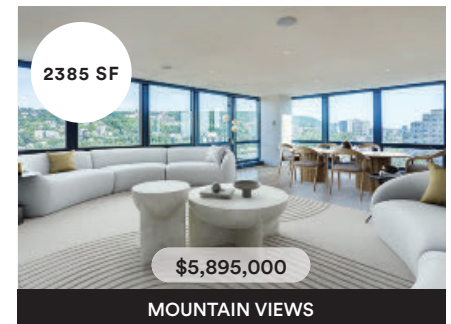
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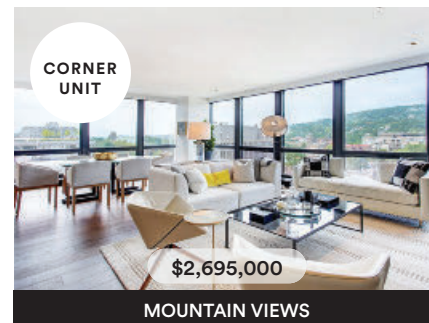
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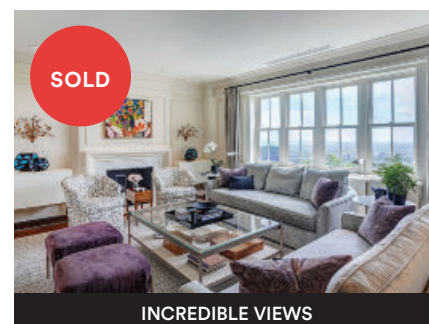
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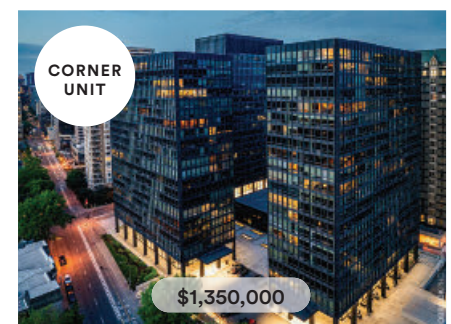
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