

Proposed: Re-building Packard building with 20 storeys

Demolition hearing October 27 set as first specific step to occur in southeast's re-development

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

The long-discussed process to develop the city's southeast sector to the west of Atwater took a major first step forward last week.

This came with the city's information about a public consultation meeting October 27 to consider proposed demolition of the empty and fire-damaged building at 4024-4032 St. Catherine and its replacement by a 20-storey highrise complex.

This site, in private hands, is the largest of several on the south side that seem ripe for re-development. They include the former Resilience/Miso/McDonald's building at the corner of Atwater and St. Catherine and an empty lot where a low-rise with

a dépanneur once stood.

Shrouded in screening for some time to protect passers-by from possible falling masonry, this existing heritage Category 1, four-storey building has long been known as the Packard building for the car dealership that originally occupied its top storeys, followed by Subaru, which moved out in December 2011 (see Jan. 24, 2012, p. 10).

Four plus 16 storeys proposed

Background on the site and the proposed replacement building after demolition approval are described in the city's notice of demolition last week.

What's proposed is an overall four-storey base covering most of the site, from *continued on p. 13*

Westmount Soccer Club wins its first girls' tourney ever



The Westmount Soccer Club's U11 (under age 11) Division 1 girls made club history on September 13 by winning the Julia Cianci Memorial Tournament in St. Laurent and becoming the first girls' team in its history to win a tournament. The club is separate from the city's Sports and Recreation department. From left, back row: Ana-Sofia Cardot, Gabrielle Bourne, Melina Saab, Pavan Kumar (assistant coach), Minami Uehara, Rebecca Simon Padilla (assistant coach), Valentine Kumar, Estelle Flynn Zamprelli, Anabel Burridge, Theya Ni Ógáin, Sharon Hauerstock and Claire Ferreira (coach); front row: Ruby Luzio, Freya Luzio, Lola Garcia-Rejon, Amelia Soni, Sana Elshafei, Claire Muchantef and Vera Hirschl Nguyen.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLISON FLYNN.

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Presentation of public lectures will continue!

Women's Canadian Club returns to Vic Hall after premature 'closure'

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Just as Mark Twain once reacted to fake news of his demise by saying, "The report of my death was an exaggeration," the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal (WCCM) also wants to make something clear.

The WCCM "is, in fact, NOT closing, but is renewing itself," the club's new presi-

dent, Katherine Snow, said in a recent e-mail to the *Independent*.

This followed an announcement by the club – last May during their last scheduled meeting before the summer while under a different board of directors – that they had decided to suspend their activities after nearly 120 years of service.

A former WCCM board member told the *continued on p. 19*



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Unlocked parked cars being 'ticketed'

Public Security works to avoid crimes of opportunity

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

Unlocked parked cars are being "ticketed" by Public Security with notices resembling an actual ticket, officials said last week. The blitz started as a warning to motorists following a rash of thefts from vehicles, mainly in "the mid-central area" area around Wood Ave. and Mount Pleasant.

It comes on the heels of many thefts from unlocked cars, said assistant director

Kimberley Colquhoun.

"While conducting extra patrols in our laneways, officers will also be checking parked vehicles that could be targeted for crimes of opportunity." Areas of concern include open windows, unlocked doors and objects of value left in plain sight.

"With our busy lifestyles," she said, "many people tend to run into the house with kids or groceries and forget to lock their car. They should make it a habit to always check before bed to make sure that everything is secure."

Contractors warned: before 7 am

After receiving complaints that garbage was being picked up early by a contractor from a laneway near St. Catherine and Tupper, Public Security officials said September 23 they had waited in the area the next day and warned the contractor that a ticket would be issued if the practice continued. Under current regulations, garbage can be collected from bins starting at 7 am the day of collection. This contractor was a private-sector entity, not a city contractor.

Leash your dog in Summit Woods

During recent patrols in Summit Woods, Public Security officials said two dog walkers were ticketed September 15.

One of the "statements of offence" was issued at 1:50 pm for not having a Westmount dog tag. The second was at 2:06 pm for a dog off leash in the centre of the woods. This was for \$672. The dog had a valid Westmount tag.

Dogs are required on leash between June 16 and October 31 from 10 am to 5 pm.

No other dog infractions were reported that day during foot patrols.



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PUBLIC SAFETY
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ATTENTION
 Votre véhicule était déverrouillé ou contenait des objets de valeur à la vue.
 Your vehicle was unlocked or had valuables in plain view.

DATE (AAAA-MM-JJ / YYYY-MM-DD) : _____ HEURE / TIME : _____
 LIEU / ADRESSE - LOCATION / ADDRESS : _____
 MARQUE / MAKE : _____ MODÈLE / MODEL : _____ PLaque / PLATE : _____

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SECURITE / VEHICLE SECURITY ☐ Portière(s) déverrouillée(s) Door(s) unlocked ☐ Fenêtre(s) ouverte(s) Window(s) open ☐ Coffre déverrouillé Trunk unlocked ☐ Clés laissées à l'intérieur Keys left inside	OBJETS VISIBLES / ITEMS IN VIEW ☐ Sac / sac à dos Bag / backpack ☐ Monnaie / pièces Coins / change ☐ Electronique Electronics ☐ Portefeuille / cartes Wallet / cards ☐ Autre / Other : _____
---	---

POURQUOI C'EST IMPORTANT / WHY IT MATTERS
 Les vols dans les véhicules sont souvent des crimes d'opportunité : quelques secondes suffisent.
 Vehicle thefts are often crimes of opportunity: a few seconds is all it takes.

3 GESTES SIMPLES / 3 SIMPLE STEPS

1. Verrouillez portes et fenêtres, même pour un court arrêt.
Lock doors and close windows, even for a quick stop.
2. Ne laissez rien à la vue : sac, monnaie, électronique, cartes.
Leave nothing in view: bags, coins, electronics, cards.
3. Emportez vos objets de valeur avec vous.
Take your valuables with you.

Activité suspecte ? Composez le 9-1-1. / Suspicious activity? Call 9-1-1.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT PUBLIC SECURITY.



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New collections available



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Olivier & Gabriele raises ovarian-cancer research funds for 10th year



Kathy, Popy, Kayden and Rosanna were collecting funds in early September at Salon Olivier and Gabriele on St. Catherine east of Greene. The donations were for ovarian cancer research raised for a Walk of Hope event in Angrignon Park September 27. “The [fundraising] group is named ‘Beau Sourire’ after our co-worker Marisa, who lost her battle with ovarian cancer. It is our 10th year walking for the cause,” said organizer Rosanna Gauthier. Donations can still be made at the salon or on the website of Ovarian Cancer Canada.

PHOTO COURTESY OF R. GAUTHIER.

Quartier Greene

— WESTMOUNT —
October 10 & 11

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DJ Brenden Kelly
HIGH FIDELITY 18 h

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Westmount's Terry Fox run raises over \$14,000

BY JENNIFER BALL

Westmount's Terry Fox run of September 20 raised \$14,410, significantly higher than last year's \$9,993.

Event organizer Marina Carricaburu Ortiz said on September 21, "Terry Fox had this amazing idea that we all got together to help. He wanted us to keep going without him and the Westmount community showed up to grant his wish to continue the Marathon of Hope...

"The event was a success. We had a great time! So far, we have \$14,410 donated online. I still have to tally up the t-shirt and

raffle sales, and donations made at the pop-ups at Metro and the YMCA. If anyone is interested in donating, the website remains open until March 2027."

Carricaburu Ortiz continued: "My deepest gratitude to [provincial legislator] Jennifer Maccarone and Gajan Rajasingam from Metro Westmount for their support toward the organization of the event; and to all the vendors who offered prizes for our raffle."

The group's Facebook page is www.facebook.com/groups/1480943109604695.

The Westmount run's website is: terryfox.ca/130054.

Work continues, deep down, on Victoria Hall's steps



As seen September 24, preparation is under way for the new staircase at the entrance to Victoria Hall under the city's contract with PHLP Construction and Excavation.

PHOTO: LAUREN SWEENEY.

Letters, p. 6

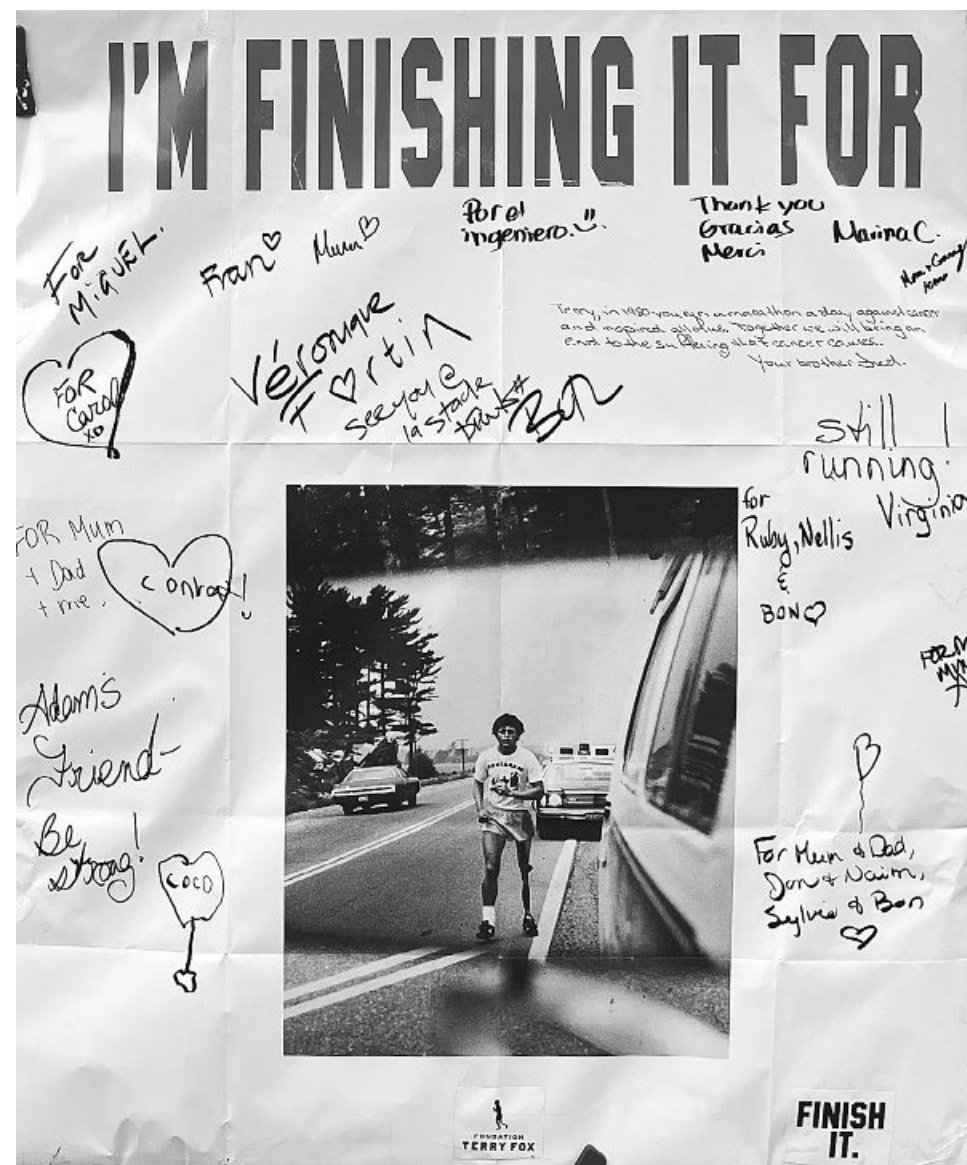
Guest column:
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The Terry Fox poster at the Westmount Athletic Grounds showing who the runners were dedicating their run to, as seen September 20.

PHOTO COURTESY OF M. CARRICABURU ORTIZ.

Going back 10+ years

Council writes off 'uncollectible' fines, now at \$137,000

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

City council September 9 approved a resolution to write off "uncollectible" amounts of fines dating back more than 10 years.

While no amounts were listed in the resolution, an overall total of \$136,600.43 was later provided to the *Independent* by Councillor Matt Aronson, whose commissionership includes legal affairs.

In moving the council resolution, he explained that the move was an "accounting decision rather than a legal one," because "treating it as money we expect is no longer realistic and is considered uncollectible."

The basic amount, he later stated had

been some \$53,637 in unpaid fines, of which many dealt with tickets issued to people who either could not be found, could not pay or had no assets to seize.

Court costs add up

"If a fine isn't collected, it just sits on our ledger, accumulating further court costs that would only ever be recovered if the person had assets to seize," as would generally apply in urban planning/real estate issues.

As an "educated guess," however, given that many of these files related to people who simply had no fixed address or were outside Quebec, none of the amounts written off had "any realistic prospect of recovery,"

continued on p. 8

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PLEASE PRESERVE
MOUNTAINSIDE CHURCH,
DON'T DEVELOP IT

The former Mountainside United Church should be preserved (for most recent coverage, see “City, developer largely silent on status of large, unused, church and lot on the boulevard” September 15, p. SL-14). The city of Westmount has already characterized the historical, aesthetic, architectural and contextual values provided by this beautiful church and property (at www.westmount.org, go to “Leisure and Community,” then “Community Life,” then “Houses of Worship”).

I would call on the owner, Mr. Revah, to preserve our heritage rather than profit from it. Look to the Molson family foundation, which created* Canadian Heritage of Quebec (CHQ) to preserve the Hurtubise House, among other properties in Quebec.

I call on our wonderful residents of Westmount to establish a trust or other non-profit way to purchase this property from the developer Revah – hopefully at a deep discount.

How shameful to turn that beautiful building and site into a single-family home or multiple-unit condo building.

What about transforming it into a small concert venue or “History of Westmount Museum”? Think about our heritage and the future and our legacy for descendants. I look forward to hearing back from Westmount residents and others for ideas on purchase and preservation.

JOHN EDWARDS, PRINCE ALBERT AVE.

**Editor’s note:* I worry that this turn of phrase obscures the names of people who made the early Canadian Heritage of Quebec conservation decisions and misstates the record.

According to an article by Karen Molson on the Tides of Tadoussac website, “In 1955, when Westmount’s Hurtubise House (built in 1714) was threatened with demolition, Jack [Colin John Molson] mounted an effort to save the island’s oldest home.

“He persuaded his friend, James Beattie, and his aunt, Mabel Molson, to help him buy the house.”

On the other hand according to its website, the Molson Foundation was founded in 1958, with “the initial funds ... provided by the late Thomas H.P. Molson and the late Honourable Hartland de Montarville Molson.”

Karen’s piece continues “In the next few years, he [Jack Molson] purchased two other properties, including natural sites in Gaspé that were vulnerable to commercial development. By 1960, the Canadian Heritage of Quebec was incorporated and had an active board of professionals as directors. The CHQ foundation, under Jack’s direction, would save the Simon Fraser House in St. Anne de Bellevue, the Laterrière Seigneurial Mill at Les Éboulements in the Charlevoix, as well as Les Rochers, Sir John A. Macdonald’s summer home in St. Patrick, and dozens of other heritage properties on both sides of the St. Lawrence River, including Bon Désir and Point à Boisvert on the North Shore.” – DP.

COULD COUNCIL PLEASE RETAIN
GREEN ADVANCES, AND REMAIN
OPEN TO CRITICISM?

At its September meeting, Westmount city council introduced By-law 1669, which would relax restrictions on gasoline-powered leaf blowers adopted by the previous council. Its adoption is scheduled for October 6.

Despite ample evidence that battery-powered leaf blowers can be just as effective, the mayor and some councillors seem determined to reverse yet another environmentally responsible initiative.

First came the decision to spend almost \$100,000 to restore weekly garbage collection.

Now comes another step backwards.

The re-introduction of gasoline-powered leaf blowers seems to follow complaints from a couple of landscaping companies at an earlier council meeting. Their arguments centred on safety and efficiency; however, one wonders if operating costs and speed were their principal concerns. Remember that last season was exceptional. Winter arrived unusually early, before many landscapers had finished collecting last fall’s leaves, leaving them with an unusually large volume to deal with this spring.

An exceptional season should not determine long-term environmental policy.

The mayor and a councillor represent-

ing upper Westmount, where lawns tend to be larger and household incomes higher, appeared particularly sympathetic to these financial arguments. Yet none of the landscapers I surveyed in my own neighbourhood objected to battery-powered equipment.

I am concerned about the direction this council is taking. Environmental measures are being rolled back, while the appointment of a councillor responsible for public order, in addition to one already responsible for public security, seems both redundant and indicative of an undue focus on law and order. And residents who raise legitimate questions at council meetings are too often cut short or dismissed by the mayor.

The combination of environmental roll-backs, an emphasis on public order and apparent intolerance of criticism resembles what we are witnessing south of the border.

Westmount should be moving forward, not dismantling the environmental progress achieved by the previous council. I encourage residents to speak up on or before October 6 and make their views known. Council still has an opportunity to reject the proposed by-law allowing for noisy, disruptive and polluting gasoline-powered leaf-blowers and demonstrate a commitment to environmental responsibility.

RICHARD DUFOUR, ANWOTH RD.

Asphalt removal gets industrial



As seen on Sherbrooke at Grosvenor September 22.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

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In Westmount–St. Louis, we need to vote

Guest column

CHRISTINA SMITH

I have a challenge for the citizens in the riding of Westmount–St. Louis. We need to vote.

Our riding has the second-lowest voter turnout in all of Quebec. Only Ungava has a lower turnout. The voter turnout in the province in the last election was 66.1 per cent and in Westmount–St. Louis, it was a shocking 44.9 per cent.

Not something to be proud of

When I first saw that number, I didn't believe it. We live in a community filled with people who are engaged, informed and not shy about sharing their opinions. That is something to be proud of.

We debate what happens at city hall and the National Assembly; we care what happens with our federal government. We care about our schools, healthcare, housing, the economy, our universities, our streets and our neighbourhoods.

We write letters. We sign petitions. We show up at community meetings and public consultations.

But too many of us don't show up to vote. Some people think their vote won't change anything.

They think the winner is a foregone conclusion. Some are fed up with politics. Some don't particularly like any of their choices.

Don't take democracy for granted

No candidate should take your vote for granted. And none of us should take democracy for granted either.

It takes courage to seek public office and to serve, and we owe casting a ballot to those brave enough to serve. It is no secret that I think we have been very fortunate in our provincial representation in Quebec City, and it takes an enormous amount of hard work and dedication to serve your constituents.

We're fortunate to live somewhere we can criticize our government, disagree with our elected officials, organize, protest, advocate and ultimately decide who gets the privilege of representing us. That right is easy to overlook when we've always had it. But democracy is more fragile than we

sometimes like to think. It doesn't sustain itself. It depends on people choosing to participate.

So I'm asking you to do something very simple on October 5.

Vote.

Read the platforms. Ask questions. Ensure candidates earn your vote. Then choose the person and the vision you believe in.

If a neighbour needs help getting to the polls, offer a hand. If a friend tells you their vote doesn't matter, remind them that democracy works best when all of us show up.

Let's move up list

Westmount–St. Louis is an extraordinary community. We should be setting the standard for democratic participation in Quebec, not sitting near the bottom of the list.

For the young people and first-time voters, commit to participating and moving this province forward. Vote in every election that you can.

Let's lose our second-to-last-place status. We can disagree about a lot of things, but on October 5, let's all agree to vote.

Christina Smith was the mayor of Westmount from 2017 to 2025.

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- You must be registered on the list of electors, and your address must be up to date. Check your registration at electionsquebec.qc.ca/check.
- You must bring an accepted piece of identification (driver's licence, health insurance card, Canadian passport, etc.).

New electoral map: your electoral division may have changed.
Check at electionsquebec.qc.ca/division.



Bring your children with you when you vote!

Introduce your children to democracy through the small polling stations.



All advance polling places are accessible. On October 5, most polling places will also be accessible. Check the accessibility features of each polling place at electionsquebec.qc.ca/where-when.

If your assigned polling place does not meet your accessibility needs, ask your returning officer for authorization to vote at another location.

On October 5, exercise your right to vote

**élections
Québec**

Featuring poems by Habs' Guy Lafleur

Exhibit on hockey great opens Sept. 29 at the city's library

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

It was only after moving here from Toronto that Westmount's online and archives librarian Lora Baiocco became a hockey fan.

Now, she has become immersed in organizing memorabilia on Guy Lafleur for the library's main entrance exhibit opening on September 29.

Handwritten letters

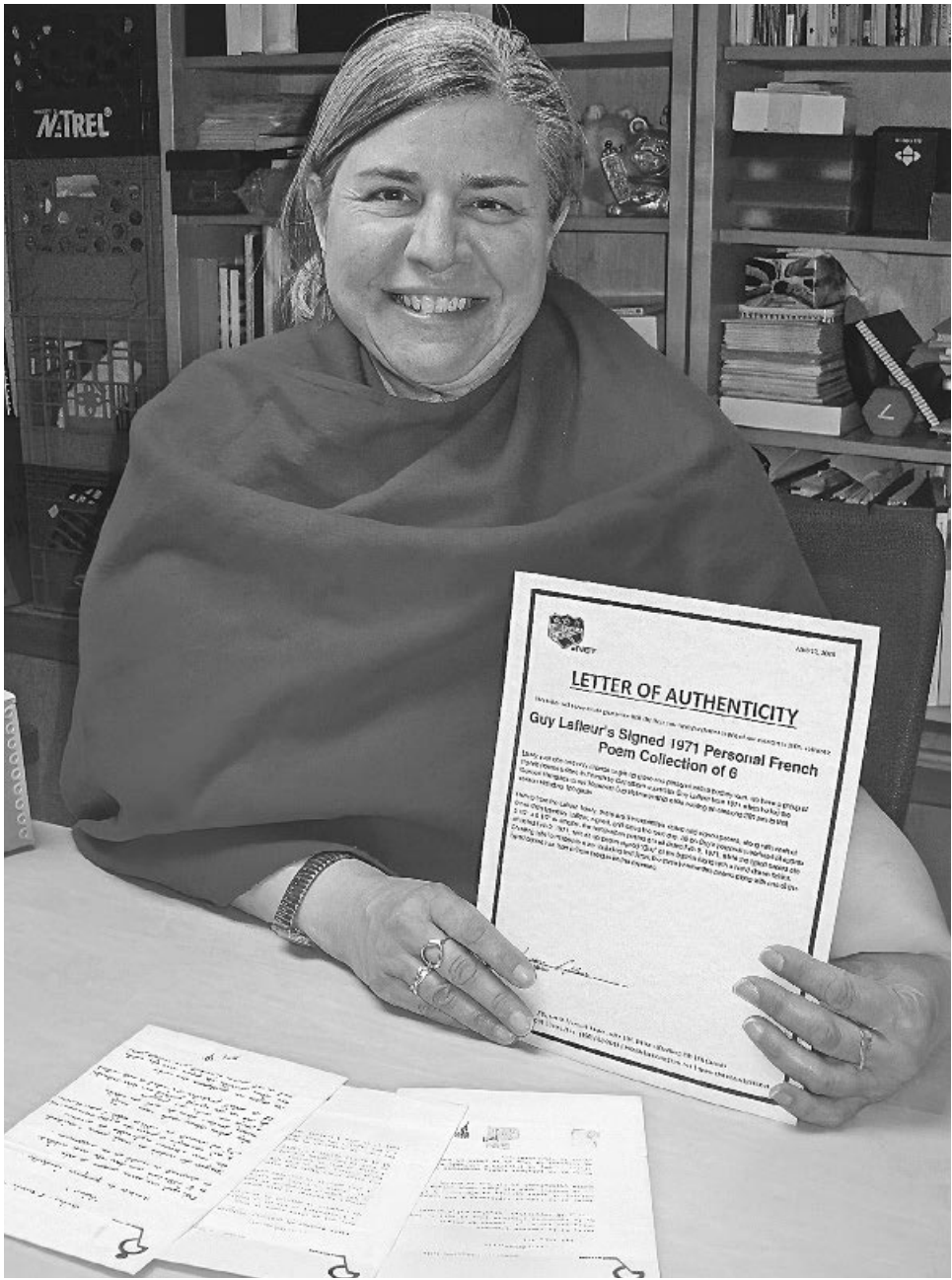
Included are his personally handwritten letters at age 19 to the woman he would marry.

Called "Literary Lafleur," the poetry is written by him on his personal letterhead, and includes other hockey-related material along with a large cut-out "so people can pose 'with him' and take pictures," she explained.

'Few have seen them'

"These poems are on loan to the library for the exhibit by someone who recently purchased them at auction. I believe very few people outside of the Lafleur family have seen them."

Lafleur (1951-2022), nicknamed "The



Lora Baiocco, online services and archives librarian at the Westmount Public Library, prepares Guy Lafleur memorabilia.

Flower," is described as the first player in the National Hockey League to score 50 points in six consecutive seasons as well as 50 goals and 100 points in six consecutive seasons.

Overheard

September 25, around 4 pm

Woman on the sidewalk to a woman driving north on Victoria near Somerville through heavy traffic:

"Are you going in [to the Metro grocery store parking lot]?"

"No, I am just trying to go up Victoria."
"It's ridiculous!"



September 22, around 8 am

Woman to man on Victoria Ave. just south of Sherbrooke:

"...subsidized daycare. Have fun with your unsubsidized daycare."



June 3 at 8:30 am

Woman to woman on Burton at Prince Albert:

"We want to get more money because this is like billions of investment for a ... company like Amazon."

Fines, cont'd from p. 5

and carrying it indefinitely overstates what the city is actually owed."

This is because the fines relate to \$50 and \$100 by-law tickets issued to people the municipal court could never locate.

As a result, "writing them off takes the \$136,000 off our books ... Legally, however, it is not a pardon and it is not a payment."

One ticket with animal control

Of the 432 individual files involved, information provided by Aronson stated that 53 percent originated with police, 40 percent with general city services (including Public Security), 3.5 percent with Urban Planning, three percent with the STM (Montreal Transit Corporation), and a single file with "animal control."

Those amounts were deemed uncollectable because the court had exhausted the ways it had to collect them. Nearly nine files in 10 were "at the end of the line," with 44 percent at the seizure stage where nothing was found to seize and 45 percent at the arrest-warrant stage where the warrant expired and came back from the police unexecuted.

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Visual Arts Centre installs access ramp



The Visual Arts Centre on Victoria Ave. at Somerville installed an accessibility ramp June 15 with little fanfare, but its installation “has significantly improved access throughout” the art school and gallery, explained its director Amber Berson, pictured above, by email September 11. “The project has made two studios fully accessible to participants with reduced mobility, as well as creating a third fully accessible washroom and installing automatic door openers throughout the first floor. ...The new accessibility features were put into immediate use this summer, with our centre’s camp benefiting ... [and] the Wagar Adult Day Program now uses the accessible facilities daily.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF VISUAL ARTS CENTRE.

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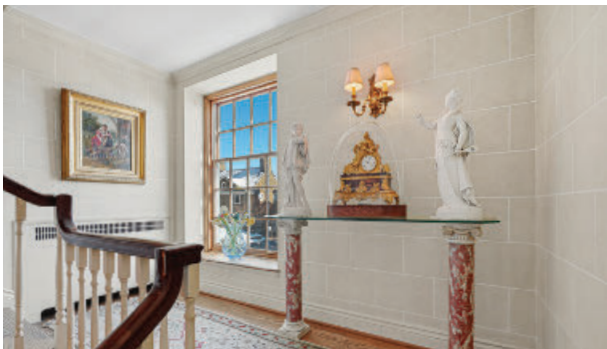


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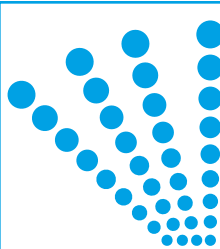
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4024-4032 St. Catherine, the Packard building, on September 25.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.



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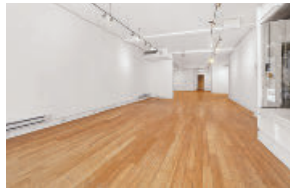
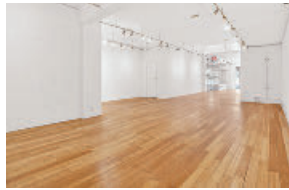
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Packard building, cont'd from p. 1

which a 16-storey tower would rise.
Broadcasting of the demolition meeting is to be streamed online via the city of



An illustration of the proposed replacement structure from the Demolition Committee presentation (p. 15) on the city's website.

Westmount's website.
Developing the city's southeast has been under discussion by three councils in different forms, starting with former mayor Peter Trent. It was originally focussed on residents of District 8 and concluded with a report by AGIL released publicly in 2018.
Eventually, however, it was opened up to include all city residents with major public consultation sessions at Victoria Hall (see June 24, 2025, p. 26).

Framework introduced

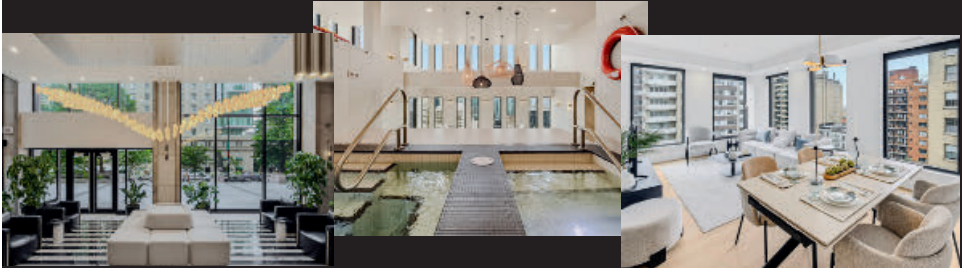
At a special meeting September 1, Westmount presented notice of motion to adopt By-law 1668, to establish a framework that would require property developers or owners to contribute financially toward local infrastructure. This would be when their projects increase demand on local services such as water, sewers and public roads.
This was considered especially applicable to owners and developers of new properties in the southeast if their projects attracted increased needs.

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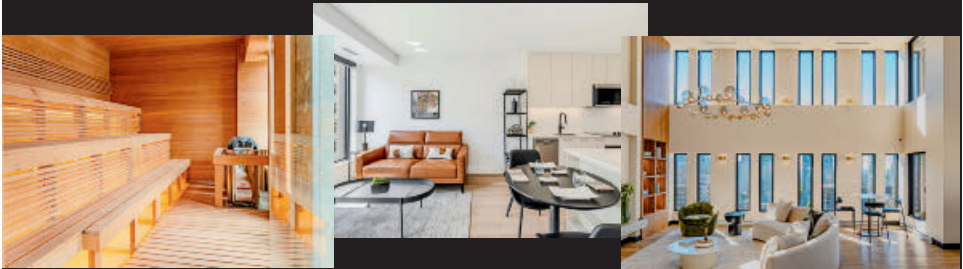


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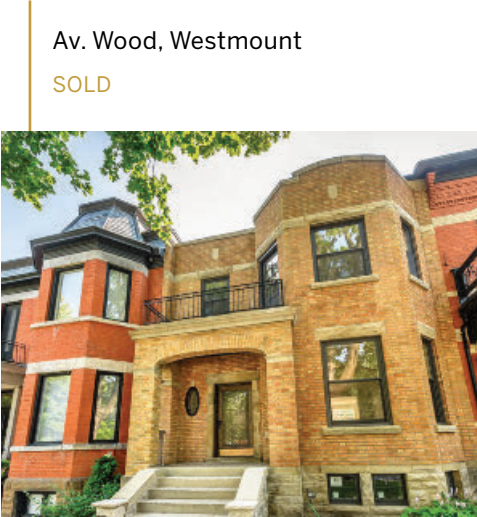
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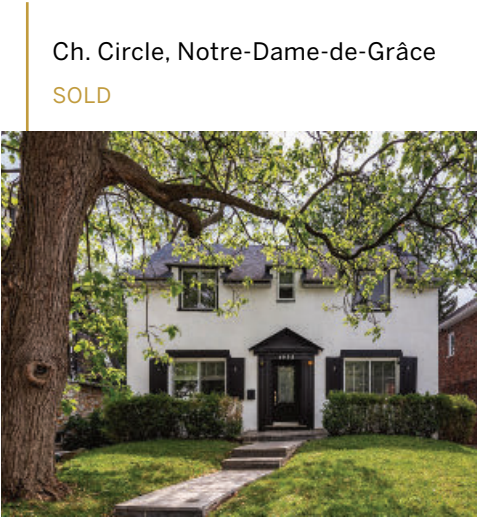
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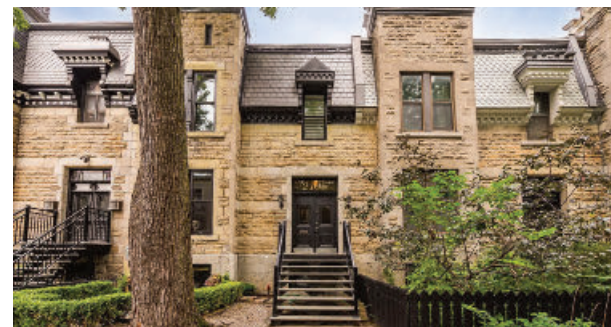
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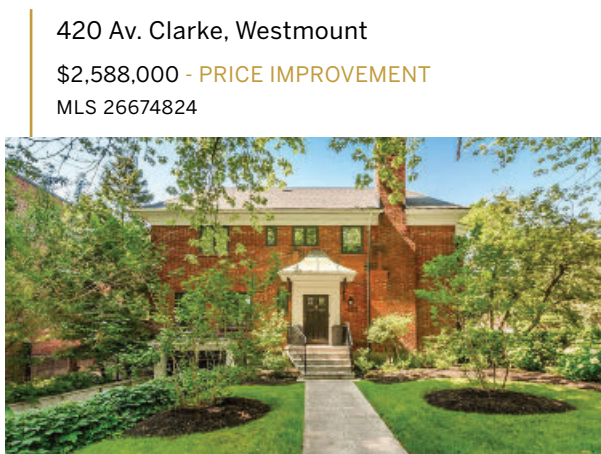
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Looking southeast at the Victoria Ave. train station on September 24.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.



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Rotary Report

Hanna of PAC, Heritage Council proposes train station as an *economusée*

By JENNIFER BALL

The Westmount train station – a red-brick pavilion with arched openings, broad square turrets and a gabled slate roof – is a heritage-designated former Canadian Pacific Railway station built in 1907. It was closed to passengers in 1984, and the city bought it in 1999.

David Hanna, who has been a member of Westmount's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) since 2018 and is also a member of the its Local Heritage Council, explained a possible way forward for the landmark. Things are complicated, but perhaps also helped, by a 1999 by-law authorizing its use as a heritage interpretive centre, an exhibition space or a public square.

The former train station's address is 4848 St. Catherine, at the foot of Victoria Ave.

At a September 16 Rotary meeting, guest speaker Hanna was introduced by his wife, Rotarian Cynthia Lulham, who is a former District 7 city councillor, serving from 1995 to 2021. Most recently, she was the general manager of Westmount's two merchant associations, resigning in February of this year.

History as a city asset

Lulham told Rotarians that she was on council when the city bought the station about 30 years ago, "We put a new [slate] roof on it. We spent a fortune because we had to build a whole new roof to hold up the slate and that's the last thing that ever happened to [the station], so it is my enormous desire to see something happen."

Hanna told the assembled audience, which included Mayor Michael Stern, and councillors Jonathan Chomski, Paul Levine and Shawn Moss, that there was an attempt at one point to re-purpose it for



Looking northwest: top, the Victoria Ave. train station in 1914 with a since demolished Congregationalist church to its west and, below, in 1984 during its final moment of operation.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID HANNA.



municipal purposes. "Right away, [citizens] took out a petition and defeated the zoning change and it's a good example of where you have to tread carefully when you propose changes to zoning."

Économusée concept

Hanna's recommendation would be to respect the zoning that's there and he introduced the concept of an *économusée*, which is a working artisanal workshop open to the public, where visitors can watch craftspeople produce goods using traditional methods and learn about the history, techniques and cultural significance of the craft.

He explained that it's not a business, "It's there to feed the organization. That's what the legislation in Quebec through economuseums has – it considers the sales of the craft to be simply part of the mission, part of what the economuseum is all about – and is not treated as commercial, even though frankly it is..."

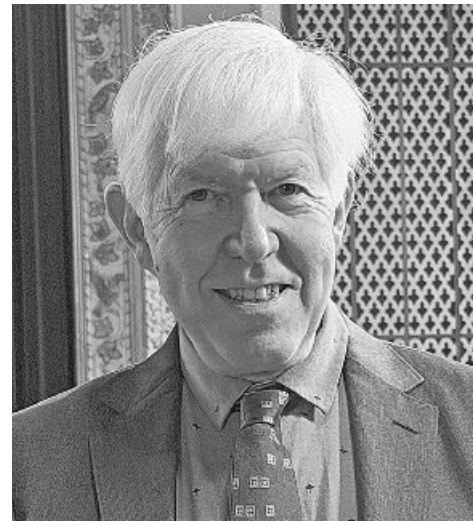
"For tax law, it's considered a museum function. This then allows the economuseum to fund its own operations out of its sales and remit a rent to the municipality." Hanna said the role of the city then is to "fix it up and then choose which economy you need to occupy it and sit back while it runs itself."

He outlined the urban planning issues to consider, namely that there are two housing projects flanking the station. "Whatever public function is found, care must be exercised by fostering good neighbourly relations."

Lulham told Rotarians Hanna retired in 2016 but his professional career was in urban planning, urban and tourism studies at UQAM and that he holds a PhD in urban geography from McGill University.

See also photo on p. 16.

Jennifer Ball, the reporter who authored this story, is a member of the Rotary Club of Westmount.



David Hanna at Victoria Hall on September 16.

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Networking, connecting before the internet

Robert Moir remembered for his innovative communications research

By MARTIN C. BARRY

In the late 1970s, long before the internet was up and running, and around a decade before pay-per-use 976 and later 1-900 phone lines allowed callers to call up and talk with others about almost anything, a young communications theory student from Westmount came up with an original idea to facilitate group chat over back-channels on the public phone system.

For his PhD thesis at McGill University's department of communications in 1978, Robert Moir decided to study the interactions between strangers using what he described as "a new method of telephone communication."

Moir, who was a longtime resident of St. Catherine St. in Westmount before moving more recently to the Vista residence in NDG, passed away earlier this

month just before his 78th birthday.

The first conference calls

His PhD experiment involved four-way telephone conferencing monitored over an eight-month period on a 9 am to 9 pm basis.

Around this time, there was no publicly-accessible way for the average Montrealer to take part in a teleconference call, although Bell Canada had internal conference call channels for line-testing purposes by its technicians.

On the suggestion of another then-Westmounter, Ronald Blumer, who was a friend and had some technical knowledge of the phone system, Moir decided to take advantage of Bell's back-channels to create a public multiple user line.

"He and I had this idea to use tied phone lines as a chat room open to every

comer," Blumer, an Emmy award-winning documentary filmmaker based in New York City, said in an interview with the Independent.

The phone number was advertised in newspaper classified ads so that anyone could call. Moir used the gathered data to closely study the interactions for his PhD research.

Were participants informed about the monitoring? "No, that didn't come up (and maybe these days we'd be sued)," said Blumer, "But in truth, they were anonymous to us and to each other; and, as with today's online lack of privacy, they only revealed what they chose to reveal about themselves. Also, from the newspaper articles, it was clear that we were monitoring the calls and from their conversations it was obvious that they knew this. They were only identified in the thesis as 'caller one,' 'caller two' [and so on]."

The two had met through the McGill Film Society.

Blumer and Moir would run into each other in the following years, since Moir worked as an attaché for the government of Quebec's delegation office in New York.

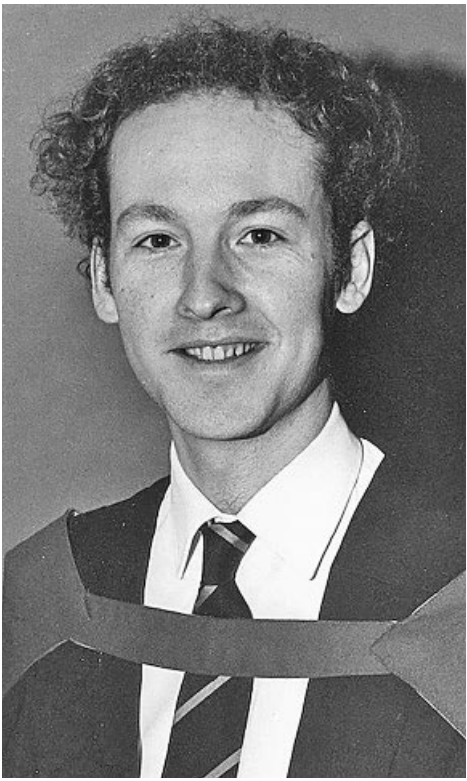
"It was, at the time, innovative and wildly popular," added Blumer. "It was like Facebook and Reddit years before the internet."

Fighting isolation

There seemed to be a need for isolated people to have some form of communication, Blumer continued.

He noted that Moir served for a time as a volunteer at Tel-Aide Montreal, and at one point contemplated implementing the technology at the service to help draw callers out of their isolation.

Blumer sees the communications theory work done by Robert Moir during the 1970s as a forerunner to the personal computer and IT revolutions that would follow during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.



Robert Moir as he appeared in 1978 when graduating with a PhD from McGill University's communications program.

"It's the world we're living in now," he said. "One thing that we certainly showed was that there was an incredible need for this. We would get thousands and thousands of calls on this line."

He said that Bell, which had a telephone monopoly at the time, never exploited Moir's idea.

However, the company introduced a fee-per-call 976 phone chat service in Ontario and Quebec in October 1986. This later evolved into 1-900 numbers. And, of course, Bell went on to greatly expand its communications offerings, including internet, from originally being only a phone service provider.



Robert Moir at age 21.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RONALD BLUMER (ABOVE) AND JOHN GODDARD.

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Police Report

Bike thefts surging during cycling championships, says police official

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

An upsurge in the theft of bicycles in Montreal last week – including one in Westmount – may have been influenced by the 2026 UCI Road World Championship cycling races taking place around then, according to a spokesperson for the Montreal police's Station 12 in Westmount.

Although it was a quiet week overall in Westmount for criminal incidents, one perpetrator managed to score a major haul by stealing a \$3,000 electric bike parked near the corner of Grosvenor Ave. and de

Maisonnette Blvd. after breaking its lock.

There was a surge of bike thefts in the downtown Montreal portion of Station 12's territory last week, according to Station 12 community relations officer Cst. Mike Yigit.

"I'm assuming that it's because of the bike race," he said. "A lot of people have been taking out their bikes, then leaving them unlocked in places like the sidewalk, where they quickly disappear."

Unlike stolen cars, which in recent years are usually being shipped clandestinely out of Canada for re-sale in foreign countries, stolen bicycles are sold locally

by the thieves who use online platforms like Facebook Marketplace or other social media to attract buyers looking for bargains, said Yigit.

"Bikes now go new for three-four-five thousand dollars, but these are quickly sold at a fraction of the price – I would say for easy money," added Yigit, referring to Facebook as the "preferred" online platform for bike thieves.

He noted the highly-publicized arrest just before the start of the bike races of a thief who stole a high-end performance bike belonging to one of the race partici-

pants. Although the bike had an estimated worth of around \$25,000, the seller offered it for sale on Facebook for \$12,000.

"Someone who knows bikes would get a great deal," said Yigit, maintaining that experienced online buyers should know enough to recognize when an item up for sale is obviously priced far too low to be legitimate.

"A \$3,000 bike that sells for \$500 or even \$1,000? After you do the math, when somebody steals a bike like this every day and makes \$500 on it, they're taking in more than you or me combined."

WCCM, cont'd from p. 1

Independent at the time that several positions on the board, including the president's position, were empty.

However, according to Snow, the WCCM "is renewing itself with an amazing group of women putting together a terrific year of speakers, special events, camaraderie and fun.

"We have big shoes to fill to continue in the spirit of the amazing women who founded this group," she added. "I am confident that each of these wonderful women is up to the task ... We are back in Victoria Hall on the third Tuesday of the month."

'First' lecture

During the WCCM's first meeting on September 15 under the new board, guest



Dr. Cécile Berne, a researcher with the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Montreal, was the WCCM's guest lecturer on September 15.



Seen on September 15 in Victoria Hall, with WCCM president Katherine Snow at the podium are members of the WCCM's new board, from left, Karen Martel, Joanne Heller, Ana Maria Ruas, Aletha Thompson, Eileen Kelly, Bonnie Fletcher, Louise Baur, Veronica Campbell and Lorraine Deley.

lecturer Dr. Cécile Berne spoke about the lessons that can be learned from bacteria.

For example, what do dental plaque, slippery river rocks and the slimy edges of neglected swimming pools have in common? According to Berne, they are all created by bacteria that have mastered the art

of sticking to surfaces.

She said nature has evolved remarkable adhesives, and some bacteria produce glues that are far stronger and more versatile than any synthetic products. She suggested that these microscopic organisms could serve to inspire the next generation

of environmentally friendly superglues.

The WCCM's second lecture on Tuesday, October 20 will feature architect Jane Ferrabee, who will talk about buildings and the women who have made a career in architecture. There are eight WCCM lectures in all this season until May 2027.

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Tuxy and Tout-Beau, bonded in love



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

Tuxy, like many male cats, is on the special food to prevent urinary blockages. He is asthmatic and has a little inhaler, which is now routine. After its use, he is rewarded with treats.

Since there is this treatment, they are offered under the rescue's compassionate adoption reduced-fee program. Both are healthy, even though Tuxy is on his daily routine. They are up to date with their inoculations, are sterilized and have had all the routine parasite and flea treatments. This is a great opportunity to enjoy the company of two loving and companionable kitties. Please do not hesitate to refer their Facebook page and email the volunteers at montrealcause4paws@gmail.com to present your interest and start a discussion for adoption with the volunteers and foster family.

Your neighbour, Lysanne



*Westmount
A-dog-tions*

LYSANNE FOWLER

This lovely white-and-blond German shepherd-type is a gentle, sensitive soul.

She is presently at the Montreal SPCA kennel, and the kennel environment has proved to be a bit challenging as she is stressed by the bustle and other dogs. Most dogs have only known a home environment when they arrive, and the settling-in phase is to be expected.

Naomie is now increasingly relaxed and adapting as her needs are met and she has a quiet space. She is ready for a family where she will catch up with the routine and outdoor environment in her new neighbourhood. She does not react to other dogs when she sees them but has a protective bark when new companions are introduced. Best that she be the only dog as she needs to be given affection and pacing in the home routine.

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

For more information on her, please do not hesitate to refer to the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com, then scroll to her information page from her identification number, 2000478078. You can then plan your visit with her and the adoption coordinators as the shelter is open every day, or Mon-

Miss Naomie

day to Friday from 3 pm to 8 pm, then Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 6 pm. It is located at 5215 Jean Talon St. West, Côte des Neiges, Montreal H4P 1X4.

Young Noemie is waiting for a family, and it would be wonderful if you opened your heart and your arms to her.

Your neighbour, Lysanne



Ometz holds AGM, chronicles helping 14,000 people last year



Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Ometz’s 2026 annual general meeting was held at the Gelber Conference Centre. After a cocktail dînatoire in the Peace Garden, **Risa Plotnick**, Ometz’s new CEO, was welcomed along with the 2026-27 board of directors **Guy Vadish**, **Karen Sigman**, **Igor Bernadski**, **Brenda Gewurz**, **Linda Schachter**, **Janice Heft**, **Bonnie**

Lester, **Sacha Brand**, **Jeffrey Berkowitz**, **Danielle Pollack**, **Gilbert Tordjman** and **Micol Haimson**, and new board members **Bonnie King**, **Beverley Shimansky** and **Frédéric Saadoun**. Longtime board member **David Martz** opened the AGM by speaking about the courage it takes for people to seek help

from Ometz, whether they’re adults re-inventing themselves after a lay-off, newcomers re-building their lives in a different country or a family in crisis. Board chair **Linda Schachter** presented an overview of the organization’s accomplishments over the past year, highlighting that *continued on p.22*



Guy Vadish, Bonnie King, Beverley Shimansky, Karen Sigman, Igor Bernadski, Brenda Gewurz, Linda Schachter, Risa Plotnick, Janice Heft, Bonnie Lester, Sacha Brand, Jeffrey Berkowitz and Frédéric Saadoun.





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Guy Vadish, Janice Heft, Rozlyn Druckman and Linda Mestel.



André Telio and Janis Levine.



Judith Benayoun, Liraz Cohen and Samantha Mintz Vineberg.



Françoise Tobelaim, Salomon Benchimol, Alexandra Saumon, Sacha and Caroline Brand, Valerie and Frédéric Saadoun.



Brenda Gewurz.



Sandy and David Martz.

Social notes, cont'd from p. 21

“Ometz is here for any member of the community who needs support.”

Last year, Ometz reached 14,000 individuals through its wide range of services, programs and activities.

Moving first-hand testimonials from Ometz clients were woven throughout the evening. These ranged from a Ukrainian newcomer who received an Ometz scholarship to help her re-start her career after fleeing her country, to a young adult who received crucial support to turn his life around after struggling with addiction.

Guests included **Rozlyn Druckman, Lesli Green, Janis Levine, Aviva Ptack, Alexandra Saumon, Carole Teitelbaum, André Telio and Samantha Mintz Vineberg.**

The event was sponsored by Industrielle Alliance, Pajar, JRC Toys, Karine Dahl and Ruben Hassan.

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St. Catherine St. work from Lansdowne to Claremont continues

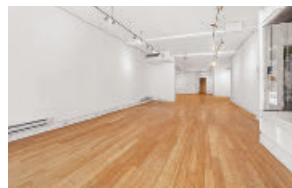
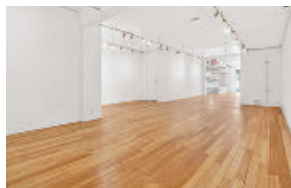


Looking east on September 28. During construction, St. Catherine remains two-way from Lansdowne to Victoria, but one-way (eastbound) from Claremont to Victoria.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

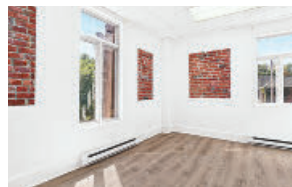
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Just blocks from Westmount, children are facing tremendous barriers to success

For more than a decade, the Valiquette Foundation, a registered Canadian charity on Van Horne Avenue, just three doors from Victoria and a few blocks from Westmount, has helped children overcome financial and social barriers through education, camps, youth development and community support.

The distance is only a few blocks, but the difference in circumstances is profound.

Many parents we serve sacrifice tremendously for their children, sometimes working two or three jobs. Roughly 30% of our families are single-mother households, nearly half do not own a car, and almost none own a home — but their dreams for their children are no different from those of any parent.

Poverty should not be mistaken for a lack of potential

Our philosophy is simple: poverty should never be mistaken for a lack of potential. Children do not choose their circumstances, but with the right opportunities and support, they can change the trajectory of their lives.

Our year-round programmes include tutoring, French and English, typing, financial literacy, AI, camps, emotional intelligence, leadership and Youth Success, which introduces older students to vocational, educational and employment pathways.

We keep these programmes as affordable as possible, but even our highly subsidised rates are beyond the reach of some families. Parents sometimes delay enrolling their children or withdraw them before the school year ends simply to save money. No child should lose access to educational support because a family cannot afford it. Every week, we feed up to 100 children through our after-school and weekend programmes.

We have donated more than 80 computers. In 2025 alone, we provided more than \$22,000 in free and heavily subsidised summer camp and tutoring. At camp, children receive daily French and mathematics alongside sports, swimming and arts. We serve children from more than 20 schools, including families referred by CLSC Côte-des-Neiges, CLSC NDG and Batshaw Youth and Family Services.

Our work has received three awards



and been featured on CTV News and CityNews Montréal.

Unfortunately, demand exceeds our capacity. After more than a decade, we have demonstrated what can be accomplished with limited resources. To reach more children, we need others who believe in what we are doing.

You can help

You can help by making a financial contribution, sponsoring a child's tutoring or summer camp, sharing professional expertise, providing corporate or foundation support, or introducing us to someone who shares our belief that a parent's financial circumstances should not determine a child's future. Sometimes one person can change the trajectory of a child's life.

Perhaps that person is you.

**We need your help.
More importantly,
the children need your help.**

Jay Valiquette

Founder & Executive Director
Valiquette Foundation
514.886.4080 | info@valiquette.org
valiquette.org

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Our Impact Report and financial statements are available upon request.

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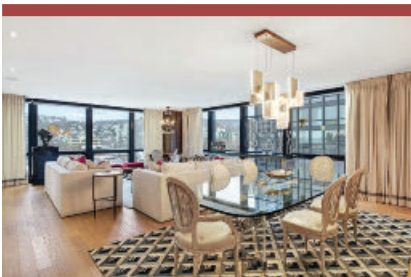
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