

Power outages caused by 'unusual' circumstances

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A combination of "exceptional" circumstances combined to cause a series of on-off power outages in Westmount's west end over more than five days last week, according to Hydro Westmount officials.

A total of 455 households and businesses were affected on escalating frequency between December 29 and January 6.

Water from a freeze-thaw cycle infiltrated the joints of the two aging underground circuits that feed the area bounded by Sherbrooke, Claremont, Côte St. Antoine and Roslyn – and even as far east as Arlington, Hydro Westmount Benoit Hurtubise said.

This put the two main circuits out of service, shifting the entire load onto the one back-up circuit, which began over-

loading in a domino effect as people returned home after the weekend and holiday period and a deep freeze set in, increasing demand to a level greater than the back-up's capacity.

This is when Hydro Westmount began load shedding, causing rotating blackouts during peak consumption times.

"It was an unfortunate set of circumstances," Hurtubise said. "Usually at this time of year, everything is frozen solid."

One of the two main circuits feeding the sector goes up Prince Albert from Sherbrooke to the Côte Rd. The source of its failure was found in a manhole at Chesterfield, where the destroyed joint had to be replaced before power could be restored to this line Wednesday evening, January 6.

Once it was operating *continued on p. 3*

Dickie Moore remembered at Mountainside

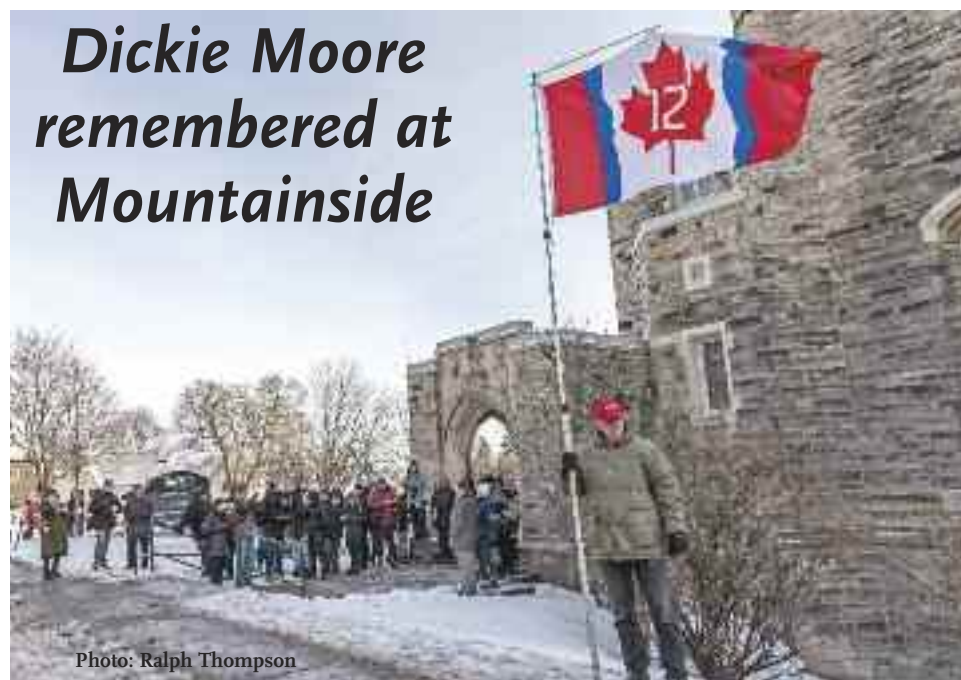


Photo: Ralph Thompson

On a cold and blustery mid-day December 28, a large group of people gathered outside Mountainside United Church. They were among reporters, photographers and fans awaiting the funeral procession of the late Dickie Moore, a famous hockey player with the Habs during the '50s and early '60s. Hank Gigandet stands with a "Canadian Duality Flag" embellished with Moore's number 12.

City gets 'A' for effort from cyclists' association

New bike path cleaning to be tweaked, Raggo says

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The city's use of a dedicated contractor to clear snow from the bike path on de Maisonneuve this winter encountered its first test during the 40-cm snow fall December 29. Both Public Works officials and cycling representatives said it required some tweaking.

These include adjustments to the equipment used on the bike path, speaking to homeowners whose snow was dumped onto the route and finding out why the portion from Victoria to Claremont remained covered with snow banks, said Public Works director Patrick Raggo.

"The trial itself is a work in progress, and the *continued on p. 8*

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Dog bites man's leg, walker ticketed

A man was bitten on the leg by a dog December 25 while he was walking with his mother near Sunnyside and Gordon Cresc., Public Security officials said. He flagged down a patroller at 1:57 pm to report what had happened, saying he would be going to the hospital to have the leg checked out. He was given alcohol wipes to clean two puncture marks.

Officers then proceeded to the home of the dog, verified its medical papers and issued a \$76 ticket to the woman who had been walking it, a member of the family who had been visiting from Etobicoke.

The incident had occurred as the woman, two dogs and a boy passed the man. He reportedly put his hand down to let one of the dogs sniff it when the German shepherd mix bit his leg. The victim was a 28-year-old living on Circle Rd. – LS

Comin' Up

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

Westmount Historical Association's "The Beaver Hall Group: Some Westmount Links" with Elena Kruger, 7 to 9 pm at the Westmount Public Library. Free to members; \$5 non-members.

Trio gets \$369 tickets for booze in car

Two men and a woman each received tickets for \$369 December 26 for possessing opened containers of alcohol in a parked car on Melville Ave., Public Security officials said. The tickets were issued under the Highway Safety Code by police, who were called to the scene by public safety officers.

The driver, a Laval man, was reported to have passed a test for possible alcohol consumption and was not charged. He was, however, given a second ticket for \$116 by Public Security for parking across a driveway.

The incident came to light at 9:48 pm when a resident complained that three people in a car were consuming alcohol and had offered some to his daughter, a minor.

On arrival, public safety officers located the car which had been moved further along the street toward Sherbrooke. They noticed an open bottle of whiskey as well as beer, and reported seeing all drinking. They asked the driver to turn off the engine and called police.

A man in the back seat admitted to having offered a drink to the young girl, said it was "a joke" and was reported to have found it to be quite amusing. – LS

One as low as 7 cents, another over \$9,500

City writes off \$133K in bad debts for hydro consumption

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Winding up accounts for the year end, city council December 7 agreed to write off \$113,557 in "non-recoverable" Hydro Westmount accounts, including bankruptcies from 2012 to 2015 and other non-collectibles related only to 2012.

The amount was more than double the historically typical amount written off.

City couldn't transfer some to new billing system

"This was unusual," said Finance commissioner Victor Drury. This is because the city was unable to transfer the portion related to bankruptcies to Hydro Westmount's new billing system launched in September (see story September 29, 2015, p. 3).

"We hope to go back to normal next year, which is about \$50,000," he said.

The amount written off this time involved a total of 231 accounts: 15 related to

bankruptcies representing \$31,639. The others, relating only to 2012 totalled \$81,918.

In many cases, the latter group involves people who moved away – often disappearing tenants – leaving behind such small amounts the city does not pursue them through a collection agency. At least one \$25 debt related to a known deceased person.

The majority bore apartment addresses with delinquent accounts as low as \$0.07 and \$0.20, though one had chalked up \$1,460. The highest was \$9,545 attributed to a bar and restaurant.

Even in cases where some businesses such as franchise operations are recognized as still operating, they could be doing so under certain circumstances, making the amounts uncollectible, according to Mayor Peter Trent.



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Outages hit west-end during holidays

cont'd. from p. 1

again, the reserve circuit was able to stand in for the other failed circuit running along Sherbrooke. Repairs to its wet joint were expected to be completed in a manhole between Lansdowne and Roslyn by Friday evening, January 8, Hurtubise said.

During the outages and load shedding, efforts were made to maintain power as long as possible to the Westmount Medical Building on Sherbrooke at the west city limits, he said.

CodeRED messages to provide updates to residents were launched January 5 and 6. Notices were also hand-delivered to the 455 affected clients on January 6. "There were lessons learned in the need to communicate earlier," Hurtubise said.

Due for replacement

Interestingly, the Prince Albert line is the one scheduled for replacement this summer during the second step of that road reconstruction project. New manholes and conduit pipes for the higher capacity cable were laid as part of the first step.

A second reserve circuit will also be laid to redistribute the load that had had to borne by the existing one last week. "This means a similar situation is unlikely to happen in the future," Hurtubise said.

Car smacks into snow bank at 5 am

A Public Security patroller spotted a Mini Cooper that had smashed into a pile of snow on the westbound side of Sherbrooke west of Clarke about 5 am on January 1.

Department officials said the driver of a Honda who had witnessed the accident stated he had found him slumped over the steering wheel.

On the officer's arrival, the driver of Cooper "emerged" from car. He was described as "clearly intoxicated."

Police were called and the matter turned over to them. No charges were laid against the man, a resident of Montreal. No other details were recorded.

— LS

Comin' Up

MONDAY, JANUARY 18

The Women's Canadian Club of Montreal's "Fairy Tales: Once Upon a Time..." with Barbara Karasek, 12:30 pm at Unitarian Church, 5035 de Maisonneuve. Members: free; \$10 for public. Info: 514.932.4005.

How the outages evolved

Tuesday, December 29: This first outage was considered the start of the larger problem. From 7:45 pm to 10 pm, it affected 281 clients scattered in the area between Sherbrooke, Arlington, The Boulevard and the west city limits. They were shifted onto the reserve circuit.

Saturday, January 2: The second circuit, affecting 210 clients, also went down (9 pm to 11:30 pm) in the "quadrant" between Sherbrooke, Claremont, Côte St. Antoine and Roslyn, shifting that area onto the back-up (reserve) circuit as well.

Sunday, January 3: Once people began returning from the weekend, the reserve circuit tripped, leaving everyone without power from 5:55 pm to 10 pm. Once the peak-use period was over, Hydro Westmount began gradually reconnecting households back to the reserve circuit.

"We were extremely unlucky this time," he said. "One of our engineers who has been here a long time said he had never seen two failures at the same time on adjacent circuits that affect the same district. I apologize to all our clients who were in-

Monday, January 4: As temperatures plunged, the same pattern was repeated. This time, load shedding was implemented between "supertime until midnight."

Tuesday, January 5: Load shedding was undertaken from 6:45 am to 10 am and 3 pm to 12:35 am, and CodeRED alerts were begun.

Wednesday, January 6: CodeRED alerts continued but with temperatures rising, the load on the reserve circuit decreased. Notices to 455 affected residents were hand delivered as some load shedding took place.

When repairs to the Prince Albert Ave. circuit were complete at 7 pm, all customers were reported to have been connected to either that circuit or the reserve one.

convenienced."

Hydro Westmount is slated to spend \$2.7 million on capital upgrades in 2016. Mayor Peter Trent said this is 2.5 times the average yearly spending in the 2000s.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEW SPORTS & REC. RATES ‘BALLSY’

Regarding “Rates up 63% for Sports & Rec card, and other hikes,” (November 17, p. 1), wow! A 63-percent hike. Now that’s ballsy.

I wonder what you’d do if your cell phone provider raised your rate that much? Or your landscaper? Cable? Anyone providing a service for a fee?

I bet you’d cancel the contract and use some pretty colourful words to do it.

I sure hope we remember these numerous fee hikes and incessant property tax increases – all despite huge surpluses and the mayor’s admission that the city is “taxing too much to run the city” (“City posts 12M surplus,” June 23, p. 1) – when the next municipal elections come around.

On that day, I hope Westmount elects new officials who will work as hard to reduce the tax burden on its citizens as the current council does coming up with new expenses (the list keeps growing), spending money like it was going out of style and finding ways to gouge its citizens.

THOMAS LAPIERRE, CHESTERFIELD AVE.

PSO ‘ANGEL’ APPEARED ON A SNOWY NIGHT

On December 29, with the first big snow storm, my daughter arrived from Europe after some delay. Because of the storm, we asked her to take a taxi, but it could not make it up to Lexington Ave. and had to stop at Sunnyside. The driver wanted to drop our daughter on the street. My daughter did not have enough Canadian currency to pay the taxi and no strength to walk up the mountain with her heavy luggage. By wonder, an angel passed at this moment: Westmount Public Security.

They drove my daughter home; we gave money to the Public Safety Officer in order to pay the taxi. Everything went well for everybody at the end.

Thanks a lot to the female safety officer.

Happy new year. We are lucky to live in Westmount.

ROSEMARIE NAMY, LEXINGTON AVE.

LOVE SOCIAL DANCING – HOW ABOUT YOU?

I am sending you a photo (see at right) taken from our social dance class Decem-



Students of social dance gather at Victoria Hall December 10. From left, front row: Clement Lam; middle row: Jerry and Mary Miller, Susan Hoffmann, Lily Lam, Nealy Dara, Betty Toye, Moo Ching Ho and Barbara-Anne Howard; back row: Chan Dara, Bogdan Giembicki, Patricia Chang, David De Santis, Ken Yoye and Evi Ho. Classes are held Thursday afternoons from 2 to 3:30 pm in the concert hall of Victoria Hall.

Photo courtesy of Victoria Hall

ber 10 at Victoria Hall with Bogdan Giembicki as the instructor. Someone in the class mentioned that they never had their 15 minutes of fame and would be honoured if the *Independent* would publish the photo, so here it is!

Thanks also to Claude Danis, program and community services coordinator with the Sports and Recreation department for her great organizational skills. (PS: It is not too late to register for classes. They start Thursday, January 14.)

PATRICIA CHANG, VILLE MARIE

SHUDDERING AT THOUGHT OF MORE SIGNAGE

With reference to the recent correspondence on hill parking (“Questioning instructions on hill parking,” December 16, p. 6), for goodness’ sake, no more signs, please!

Every available post is already festooned with parking signs of all description, some barely comprehensible and often contradictory. None other than the mayor of Montreal, Denis Coderre, is acutely aware of this out-of-control situation (see the article on p.A3 of the *Gazette*, December 17).

A complete change in the approach to parking is being undertaken for Montreal.

A better way to enforce the hill parking regulation would be to give first offenders warning tickets in which the regulation is

explained. This I believe would satisfy any legal rule that parking regulations need to be brought to the specific attention of the public in order to be enforceable, without adding to signage pollution.

Westmount By-law 726, section 58, by the way, contains a lot of other instructions on hill parking, for example, use of the handbrake, putting the car in gear or “park,” etc.

If we are going to have more signs, to be consistent, shouldn’t all this stuff be included as well? I shudder.

ROBERT COWLING, PARKMAN PL.

THANK YOU, KNUUTTAL

What refreshing and pleasant surprise to read the December 16 letter to the editor from Skip Knuttal (“Message from Knuttal,” p. 6). It certainly was a departure from the regular sniping and complaining about the decisions made by the duly elected Mayor Peter Trent and city council, and the those employed by the city of Westmount.

Keep the letters coming, Skip.

KENNETH BERG, EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Comin’ Up

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19

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LETTERS & COMMENTS:

We welcome your letters but reserve the right to choose and edit them. Please limit to 300 words and submit before Friday 10 am to be considered for publication the following week. Please check your letter carefully as we may be unable to make subsequently submitted changes. E-mail any letter or comments to indie@westmountindependent.com.

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Bike path cont'd. from p. 1

model needs to be tweaked,” he explained. “But the contractor worked out well.” “The city deserves a big ‘A’ for effort,” said Dan Lambert, president of the Association of Pedestrians and Cyclists of Westmount. “The new contractor moved quickly, but it did not translate into what we were looking for.”

This was to create an unimpeded route between Montreal West and downtown, which did not occur for some five days because of the delay in removing snow west of Victoria, Lambert said.

It was only two winters ago, however,

that he and the Westmount group gave the city a failing grade for winter maintenance (see story April 15, 2014, p. 4).

Lambert said members of cycling associations in Westmount as well as the Montreal boroughs of NDG and Ville Marie have been monitoring the condition of the three sections of the commuter route and relaying their findings daily to the appropriate municipal officials.

What happened west of Victoria?

“I have to follow up with the contractor and find out what happened west of Victoria,” Raggo said. “I don’t understand why it wasn’t done to the same level as the rest.”

Raggo said he and Public Security director Greg McBain had met before the winter with private contractors to tell them it was unacceptable to dump snow on the sidewalk or bike path. They were provided with solutions which, in general, were to use the north side of the street.

Lines of communication were also established with the owners of large buildings along the route as well as their contractors.

This paid off, he said. In one case, a “hiccup” outside Alexis Nihon Plaza was quickly fixed. This had been a problem area other winters, Lambert noted.

Somewhat ironically, Raggo said, most of the bike path was so clean that cars were actually migrating onto it rather than driving on the street. Bollards are typically removed in the late fall.

City-wide results

Throughout the city, the size of the snowfall, followed by another of 5 to 10 cm, provided a challenge, Raggo said. But from a safety perspective, the timing – after holiday shopping and while schools were still closed – made the work less stressful for vehicle operators.

One innovation this winter was to remove snow from both sides of St. Catherine St. at the beginning of the operation rather than only one, Raggo said. “This worked out well because it diverted traffic



The bike path was “well cleaned” near Alexis Nihon on January 1, according to Dan Lambert.



The bike path covered with a pile of snow just west of Victoria on January 1.



Snow from private property was pushed onto the bike path after it had been cleaned January 4.

away from the secondary streets onto both Sherbrooke and St. Catherine.”

The overall operation “went well,” he said. While snow loading and disposal was interrupted by a mandatory New Year’s break, “By Monday [January 4], we had loaded the entire city.”

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Church's Friday night 'Climate Café' kicks off

By JOANNE PENHALE

Westmount Park United Church held its first Climate Café – an evening of short films, live music and mingling. It took place December 11.

"We're here because we are concerned for nature," said the church's minister Neil Whitehouse, adding friendships could be forged during the evening based on shared concerns for nature. The event was also billed as a celebration of the recent COP 21 talks in Paris.

Whitehouse introduced several short on-line videos that were projected during the evening to the some 30 people who attended. The first video, produced at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, outlined how greenhouse gases changes the climate and recommended how people can reduce their emissions, including buying local products and taking "staycations."

Other videos included a recent skit from *This Hour has 22 Minutes*, featuring actors playing Environment minister Catherine McKenna, Green Party leader Elizabeth May and David Suzuki, as well as videos featuring honeybees and blooming orchids, each with instrumental soundtracks.

Westmounter Wenbo Zhang attended the climate café with her 10-year-old daughter after seeing advertisements posted near the church.

"I want to make new friends in this community," Zhang told the *Independent*. In July, she immigrated to Canada with her family from Beijing. "The environment in China is seriously polluted, and this needs to change," she said, adding people need to live more economically and use less energy.

The film screenings were interspersed with performances by three solo musicians: for- continued on p. 11



About 30 guests attended the December 11 event, part of the Faith in Nature series initiated by minister Neil Whitehouse.

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Art-full evening raises funds for CHW



*Social Notes
from Westmount
and Beyond*

VERONICA REDGRAVE

On October 13, the Montreal Center of Canadian Hadassah WIZO (CHW) hosted its annual art auction “For the Love of Art” held at Galerie Le Royer. CHW Montreal has hosted a charity art auction since 1956.

Its president, Westmounter **Sheila Nemtin Levine**, welcomed guests to the silent and live auctions, along with auctioneer **Neil Horowitz**.

Noted arriving were Westmounters **Francine and Robert Wiseman**, **Carrie Mazoff** and **Alyssa Yufe**, as well as **Sonia and Greg Mitelman**, **Frema and Mark Routtenberg**, **Lucy and Stewart Shapiro** and the **Bissell family – Eric, Marc and Naomi**.

Other notable guests were **Susan and Joseph Balinsky**, **Jessica and Ronald Balinsky**, **Wendy and Rob Gold**, **Marla and Robert Hirscheimer**, **Tamar** (mother) and daughter **Renee Gordon**, **Melissa Singer** and **Leesa Steinberg**.



From left, front row: **Jacquie Young**, **Sigal Weizmann**, **Norma Bassal**, **Sarah Hutman**, **Marcy Segall** and **Alana Shiveck**; back row: **Lianne Routtenberg**, **Cara Itzkovitz**, **Alanna Elias**, **Marla Goodwin-Zipper** and **Sheila Nemtin-Levine**.



Sheila Nemtin Levine, left, and Neil Horowitz.

Norma Bassal, **Marcy and Mark Segall**, **Alana and Stuart Shiveck**, **Lianne and Michael Routtenberg**, **Cara and George Itzkovitz**, and **Marla and Rick Zipper**.

The well-attended event raised over \$65,000 for CHW projects.

For almost 100 years, CHW – a women’s volunteer organization – has been dedicated to the support of children, healthcare and women in Israel and Canada. Projects they have funded in Montreal include LOVE Quebec, the Montreal Children’s Hospital, the Missing Children’s Network and women’s shelters.



Carrie Mazoff, left, and Alyssa Yufe.



Eric Bissell, left, and Mark Routtenberg.



Francine and Robert Wiseman.

Committee members included event coordinator **Sarah Hutman** (there with husband **Gary Hutman**), **Jacquie Young**, **Sigal and Allan Weizmann**, **Alison Miller**,

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University Women's Club of Montreal
Wednesday, January 20th at 6pm in the Atwater Club, 3505 Avenue Atwater

Richard Shoemaker, Professor in Physics and Astrophysics, will speak about solar and lunar eclipses, how they are caused, how to view safely, and why some types are common while others are quite rare. He will also speak about the great American eclipse of 2017 and reveal a treat for Montreal in 2024.

Dinner \$31.04 (members), \$50 (non-members; glass of wine incl).
Reservations required by January 14th. Newcomers welcome.
For reservations or information **514 934-1362** or email uwcm@uwcm.com

On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...



Left: The grass is green around city hall on Christmas Day 2015 around 11 am. The scene was more like a tranquil setting in the English countryside than a typical Canadian winter day. Right: Four days later on December 29, the city saw its first major snow fall, record-setting for the date at about 40 cm of snow.

Photos: Ralph Thompson

Climate café cont'd. from p. 9

mer Study student Juliana Just Costa, a well as Jason Allman and David Hernon.

Westmounter Susan Grundy was in attendance. She had led a campaign to have the city of Westmount sign onto the Blue Dot Movement – a David Suzuki Foundation initiative declaring citizens' rights to a healthy environment. The city approved that resolution in March of this year. (See story March 10, 2015, p. 4.)

Grundy also attended a Westmount Park United Church roundtable discussion in early November that brought together

Montrealers who work on environmental issues. That meeting, as well as the café night and other initiatives, are part of the church's Faith in Nature programming, initiated by Whitehouse.

"He wants to redefine this church," Grundy said, adding she loves the concept. "I believe environmental groups should work together."

Church administrator Shelagh McNally, a former environmental reporter, helped organize the event and told the *Independent*, "It can be really overwhelming when you see the big picture ... almost paralyzing," McNally said, noting Earth's rising sea levels, species extinction and food shortages. The recent COP 21 talks and other political developments have helped people feel more optimistic, McNally said, adding that focusing on local initiatives is empowering.

Comin' Up

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom's first "coffeehouse," 7:30 pm, featuring singer-songwriters at Shaika Café, 5526 Sherbrooke St. Suggested donation: \$10.

PSO helps distressed woman in early hours of New Year's day

A Public Security patroller who had parked on Sherbrooke near Victoria to complete a report of a previous incident was approached for help by a woman at 2:30 am on January 1. Department officials said she appeared to have been crying and was described as "agitated." It turned out she was unable to gain entry to her boyfriend's home on Abbott. The officer helped her contact him by phone, and arrangements were made for her to get inside.

"This shows the value of our officers being able to park visibly while preparing their reports on our new Toughpads," said Public Security director Greg McBain (see story November 17, p. 4).

– LS

Great weather for a party?

Unseasonably warm weather at the end of December brought out at least two groups of people to Sunnyside Park below the Summit lookout in violation of the midnight curfew. Public Security officials said seven tickets for \$76 each were issued: four on December 22 at 1:18 am and another three two nights later at 3:32 am. All involved had beer in their possession. None lived in Westmount.

Poodle goes to SPCA

A white poodle was found December 24 at 2:07 pm at 3119 St. Antoine St., Public Security officials said. It bore no identification. When the dog remained unclaimed at the station by 4 pm it was taken to the SPCA.



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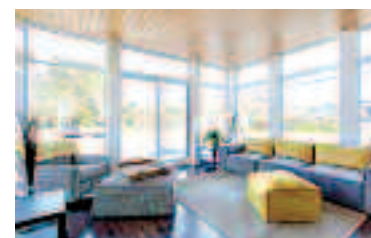
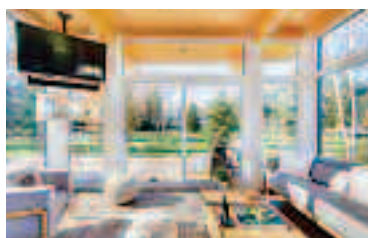
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