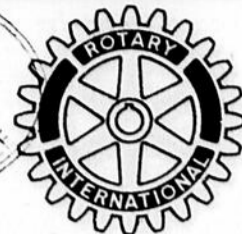


The Westmount Examiner

Transcontinental

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Reflections on the first year back

The past year was supposed to represent a fresh start for Westmount, the first year of regained municipal autonomy. It was, to some extent, but it proved to be a far cry from what legions of demerger advocates envisioned throughout their long campaign to secede from the Montreal megacity.

One of the recurring news items involved Montreal's agglomeration council and how Westmount Mayor Karin Marks and her fellow demerged mayors remained at constant odds with the new municipal bureaucracy.

The year 2006 also saw what was arguably Westmount's highest-profile news story to date—the shooting rampage at Dawson College on Sept. 13.

The heavy media coverage ensured that the horrors of that one afternoon were broadcast around the world, and the Westmount campus remained in the spotlight for several days afterward.

We also saw a fair amount of debate over local issues, such as the proposal to install artificial turf in Westmount Park and the felling of several dozen trees in Sunnyside Park, beneath the Summit lookout.

There were also positive stories, such as the installation of a sound barrier test panel next to the railway tracks and Ville Marie Expressway—the result of tireless lobbying by citizens throughout the area.

In this issue, our annual Year in Review feature, *The Examiner* takes a look back at some of the many events, both major and minor, that took place over the past year.



*The Westmount Examiner team
wishes its readers a
happy and prosperous 2007!*



January

•The year kicked off immediately with a festive occasion as the City of Westmount celebrated its return to municipal status after four years as a borough of Montreal.

On New Year's Day, City officials and residents gathered at City Hall to celebrate the first official day of demerged Westmount, under new Mayor Karin Marks.

The day was highlighted by a ceremonial flag raising on the lawn of City Hall, followed by a musical celebration in Victoria Hall and a bonfire in Westmount Park.

•With a federal election scheduled for Jan. 23, the Westmount Municipal Association and *The Examiner* once again co-organized a Meet the Candidates evening in Victoria Hall—an opportunity for voters to come out and question candidates on their respective platforms.

Although there were seven candidates on the ballot, and five attending the meeting, the event was dominated by representatives of three parties—the Liberals, Conservatives and NDP—who fielded a wide variety of questions from the audience.

•The City of Westmount looked into the possibility of installing auditory crosswalks for visually impaired pedestrians at the corner of Sherbrooke Street and Lansdowne Avenue. The issue was brought up by Jim Griffin, a past-president of the Manoir Westmount seniors' residence.

•The Westmount Historical Association announced that its spring lecture series would be devoted to the accomplishments of one man—noted architect Robert Findlay, who designed several local landmarks, including City Hall, the first Victoria Hall, the Westmount Public Library and the pavilion in King George Park. A series of four monthly lectures would be based around Findlay's life and work.

•The Westmount Public Library added a new activity to its list of programs—a Friday night film club that would feature lesser-known films from around the world. "It's not your Disney Friday night," said librarian Donna Lach. "It's a club for people who have a real interest in film and like to discuss films

that have real themes and meanings."

•Westmount's long-time Member of Parliament Lucienne Robillard was returned to office in the federal election—but this time she was facing a term in Opposition, as the scandal-plagued Liberals could not beat the Conservatives under Stephen Harper. Louise O'Sullivan, running on the Conservative ticket, came in second, while NDP hopeful Eric Steedman finished third, ahead of Bloc Québécois candidate Sophie Frechette.

•Demerged city officials across Montreal expressed their outrage over the Tremblay administration's revised budget, which they said put an even greater financial burden on the suburbs—raising taxes by 13.3 per cent. "It shows how wrong the process is," said an angry Mayor Marks. "There was no consultation. We could not adjust the taxes to suit our taxpayers. The law will have to be changed so that the budget is done jointly."

Selwyn House community's reputation prompted outrage from several other alleged victims.

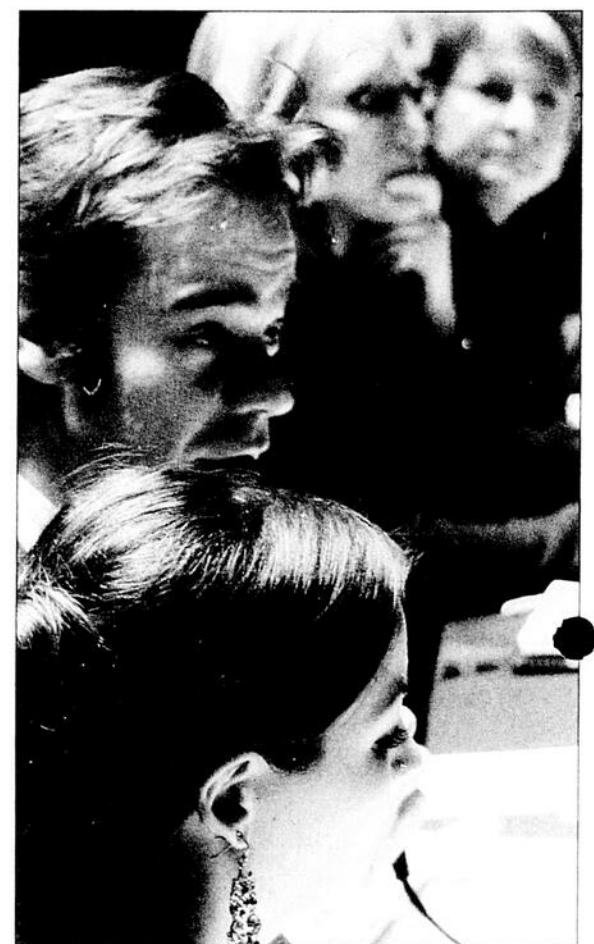
•Congregation Shaar Hashomayim hosted an evening of local rock with a battle of the bands entitled 'Shul of Rock', featuring a variety of musical talent that included the FACE Blues Band, Moska and Cosmic Granola. Proceeds from the event were donated to the Mimi Najman Rehabilitation Foundation.

•Students of The Study were treated to a visit by Montreal Alouettes Luke Fritz and Dave Stala, who spoke to the girls about social issues such as bullying—all part of the team's 'School is Cool' program.

February

•Westmount's 23rd annual Winter Carnival kicked off the month with many of the old favourite activities and at least one interesting addition—an Irish pub event in Victoria Hall. About 100 people attended the 'Raven and the Rose' evening, which raised approximately \$1,200 for Westmount's new St. Patrick's Day float.

•Selwyn House School found itself in the midst of a sex-abuse scandal dating back more than 30 years, when two former students launched civil action suits against the school for incidents they said took place in the 1970s. *The Examiner's* defense of the current



'Meet the Candidates' evening in Victoria Hall.

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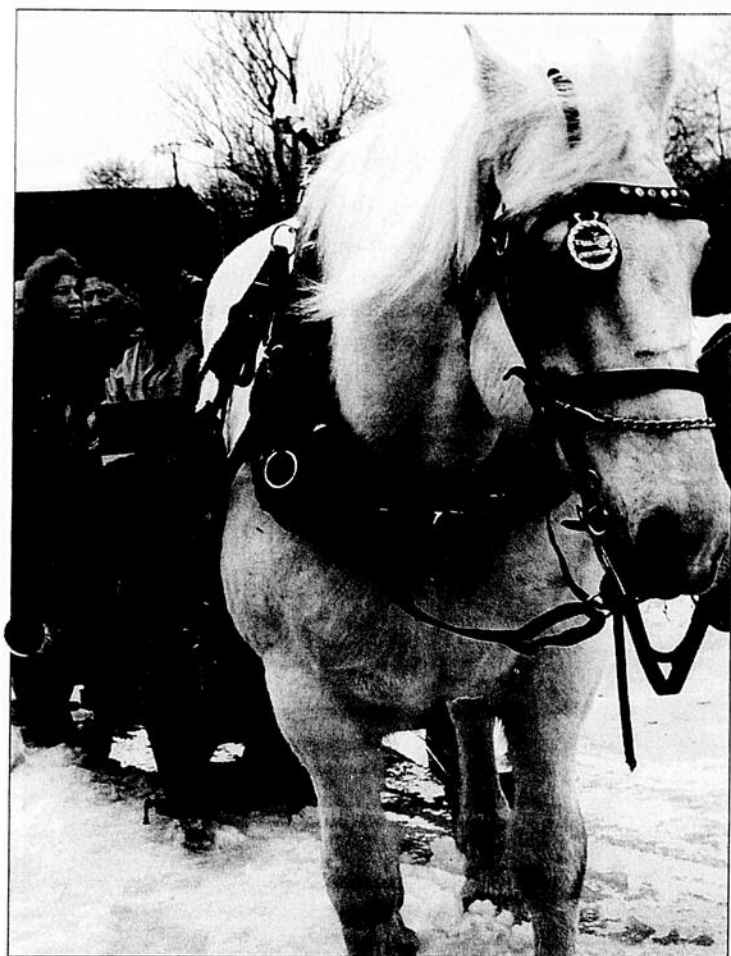
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2006: THE YEAR IN REVIEW



A winter carnival tradition

all these images flashing into my mind."

•The Rotary Club of Westmount raised its profile in the community by holding a gala soiree in Victoria Hall to mark its 75th anniversary. More than 80 members and guests crowded into the Gallery to enjoy an evening of good food and a healthy dose of the Club's motto: "Service Above Self."

•After just a few months online, it was announced that *The Examiner's* website had exceeded all expectations by attracting more than 11,000 visitors during the month of February. According to regional manager Gordon Brewerton, *The Examiner's* site

was receiving at least double the number of visitors to sites of most of the other Transcontinental newspapers. "When you consider that *The Examiner* puts out 9,800 copies of the newspaper in any given week, yet has 11,152 unique visitors on the website,



Rotary draws a crowd

there are more individuals going to the site," Brewerton said.

March

•Selwyn House School's robotics team managed to beat out 17 other high school teams in the CRC Robotics Challenge, held at College Regina Assumpta in Ahuntsic. The 25-member Selwyn team, consisting of students in grades 9 to 11, built and operated a robot that won a game called Annopoly, in which robots compete by gathering objects.

•The City of Westmount announced a new environmental service—the collection of green waste. Residents could now place bags of garden waste, such as leaves, behind the sidewalk for collection on Wednesdays. "It is another Westmount initiative to be proud of," said city councillor John de Castell. "Montreal won't begin until next year at the earliest, probably later." Kitchen waste was considered beyond the scope of the project, but residents were encouraged to add vegetable scraps to the garden waste.

•The pews of Ascension of Our Lord Church were filled as hundreds of Westmounters gathered for the funeral of Max Pompili, husband of city councillor Cynthia Lulham and well-known chef, who died suddenly at the age of 48.

•Westmount's new St. Patrick's Day float was given its debut at the annual Montreal event. Organizers, consisting of a handful of dedicated volunteers, were able to assemble the new float despite much less help than in previous years. Many potential volunteers stayed away, probably daunted by the dreary skies and cold weather.

•The events in a far-off land were brought home to Westmount by photojournalist Robert Galbraith, who had recently returned from war-torn Afghanistan. He delivered the illustrated lecture 'Afghanistan: Why Are We There?' to a fascinated crowd at the Westmount Public Library. "You go into this place and it'll change your life," Galbraith said of his war experience. "I walk around Montreal and I feel like a ghost because I have



Shaar Hashomayim's 'Shul of Rock'

April

•Many residents of lower Westmount were pleased to see the first signs of construction for an experimental sound barrier at the foot

of Abbott Avenue. For years, neighbours have been complaining of noise from passing commuter trains and the Ville Marie Expressway. The 30-metre prototype would be erected to gauge the effectiveness of a full-length sound barrier along the track and highway in southern Westmount.

•The world-wide threat of bird flu was addressed by local doctor Joel Carsley, who told a meeting of the Westmount Healthy City Project that there is no need to panic. "Bird flu is not the pandemic and we don't know if or when it will turn into a human pandemic situation, nor do we know how severe the illness will be," said Dr. Carsley, chief of the health protection sector of the Montreal Public Health Department.

•Students at The Study had a high-flying visitor—none other than Canadian astronaut Marc Garneau, who dropped by to talk about space travel and the future of space exploration. As for a trip to Mars, he said, "I think within your lifetime we will witness human beings going on to Mars... It will be a two-and-a-half-year round trip; six months to go there, a year-and-a-half on the planet, and then six months to come back."

•Congregation Shaar Hashomayim held a tribute dinner for Rabbi Emeritus Dr. Wilfred Shuchat to commemorate his 60 years of service to the synagogue. "He was at the pulpit of Shaar Hashomayim when his community looked to him for guidance and leadership, both during times of great joy, such as at the birth of the State of Israel, and times of great crisis, such as the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War and the Munich Massacre," said event chair Stephen Lipper. "Rabbi Shuchat has been here for us all, throughout several generations, as he still is today."

•Those unfamiliar with the work of Samuel Beckett got a first-hand glimpse thanks to Westmount's Gleams Theatre troupe, who marked the absurdist playwright's centennial year by mounting a series of his plays, first on St. Laurent Boulevard, then in Westmount at Victoria Hall. 'Play', 'Rockaby' and 'What Where' were presented, under the direction of Constantin Sokolov.



Astronaut Marc Garneau at The Study

Nancy Wright of Kensington Avenue.

It was also announced that the MNA would continue without two key positions—president and secretary. These two posts would be handled on an interim rotational basis.

•More than 1,000 runners took to the streets of Westmount on a sunny morning as the Westmount YMCA held its Defi Westmount P U M A Challenge—an annual event to raise funds for Kamp Kinema, the Y's summer daycamp. "It was great—we couldn't have asked for

a better day," said Tracy Kamel, one of the main organizers. By the time it was over, Kamel expected the event to raise about \$20,000.

•A group of 200 people in lower Westmount, led by St. Antoine Street resident Peter Krantz, filed a \$20 million class action suit against two construction companies for noise pollution that allegedly resulted from work on the Ville Marie Expressway between 1998 and 2000. Noise levels were said to be as high as 96 decibels—much higher than the threshold for possible hearing loss. "That's when I realized this is really serious," Krantz

said.

•It took him a few more years than most, but former Roslyn School student David Levy finally received his elementary school diploma. The noted astronomer, best-known as the co-discoverer of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet, was presented with his diploma by principal James McMorran during a visit to his old school, 46 years after he missed his final day at Roslyn due to a broken arm.

would soon be filled by Richard Blondin, a former Montreal police officer and most recently head of security at the Louis-Hippolyte-Lafontaine Hospital in the east end.

•In keeping with a trend throughout North America, the popularity of soccer in Westmount had grown to the point where the City's Sports & Recreation Department had nearly 900 young athletes enrolled in its



The 2006 Derek Walker Volunteer Citizen of the Year, Nancy Wright, with husband Jim

•The increasing rash of home invasions hit Westmount when three intruders broke into a Selby Street home and tied up two residents. Police immediately assured the public that there was no need to panic. "From the information I've received as such, this incident doesn't pose any threat to the community," said city councillor John de Castell, commissioner of community safety and, ironically, owner and resident of the building where the incident took place.

spring soccer program. "It's probably the biggest it's ever been," said administrator Stephen Robaire. "This places soccer well above hockey as Westmount's most popular sports program. Its success could be attributed to its all-inclusive nature because there is a team for nearly everyone. Scheduling-wise, all the fields are packed every night, so it's great."

•The long-awaited Noel report, which addressed the dispute between the demerged cities and the City of Montreal, came as a disappointment to Mayor Karin Marks, who had hoped that \$105 million in agglomeration budget funds would be returned to the demerged cities. Instead, arbitrator Roger Noel recommended that \$41.4 be returned. "I'm disappointed that it's \$41 million instead of more," said Marks. "We felt that \$105 million was actually a minimum and there were probably other things that we didn't know about."

May

•The Westmount Municipal Association held its annual general meeting in Victoria Hall, with guest speaker Dick Pound, best known as chair of the World Anti-Doping Agency and a key player on the International Olympic Committee. In his keynote speech, the Arlington Avenue resident stressed the importance of community and education, pointing out that every Olympic champion got their start in their own community.

The event also saw the presentation of the WMA's annual Derek Walker Volunteer Citizen of the Year Award, which went to

June

•After 26 years of service, Public Security Director Richard McEnroe announced his retirement. "Over his career, Richard has made many significant contributions to improving safety of our community," said city councillor John de Castell. "In fact, too many to even address."

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- 2006** > December 6 **Milton-Parc and Jeanne-Mance:** McGill University, Arts Building, Room 160
- January 10 **Ville-Marie:** Atwater Library, 1200 Atwater Avenue
- 2007** > February 7 **Westmount and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce**
- March 7 **Mount Royal Park**

Les Amis
de la montagne

2006: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

•Quebec's annual St. Jean Baptiste holiday was celebrated in Westmount Park with the traditional bonfire and fleur-de-lys cake—as well as a lot of music and plenty of activities for the kids.

July

•The summer kicked off with the annual Canada Day celebration in Westmount Park, with the popular overnight camp-out and, of course, the traditional Splash Bash in the municipal pool.

•Two young Westmounters—Daniel Kliger of Roslyn Avenue and Ryan Stotland of Cedar Avenue—set off on a cross-country bicycle trek that would take them from Victoria, B.C. to St. John's, Nfld. The 8,000-kilometre journey was a fundraising effort for skin cancer research.



Soccer surpasses hockey as Westmount's most popular sport for kids

•The Westmount community was saddened by news of the death of retired Fire Chief Jim Adams at age 66. A staunch opponent of the forced municipal mergers, Adams swore he would never work for the Montreal fire department and retired in late 2001—just before Westmount became a borough of Montreal.

•In what was dismissed by many as merely an opportunity to gain votes from discouraged citizens of demerged communities, Action Démocratique leader Mario Dumont announced his intention to abolish Montreal's Agglomeration Council among other changes. Speaking at a luncheon co-organized by the Montreal Westward and Westmount Rotary Clubs in Victoria Hall, Dumont also pledged to do away with the



Public Security Director Richard McEnroe retires

current "double billing" system of municipal taxation.

August

•Members of the Westmount Train Action Group reached out to neighbours in lower

Westmount with a telephone survey to gauge public opinion on the ongoing commuter train noise problems in the area. "The WTAG is asking all residents affected by the vibrations and noise to partake in this survey," they said. The group had been holding meetings with various organizations, including CP Rail, to keep up-to-date on the latest developments in noise-reduction efforts in Westmount.

•Neighbours and heritage activists expressed their concern over announced renovation plans to Oaklands, the former Samuel Bronfman residence on Belvedere Road. They were assured that demolition plans were restricted to an extension building and that the mansion, now owned by grandson Stephen Bronfman, would remain intact.

•Repercussion Theatre continued its summer tradition of Shakespeare in the Park, this time performing a swing-era version of *Much Ado About Nothing* in Westmount Park, complete with singing, dancing and plenty of lively 1940s music.

Continued on page 8

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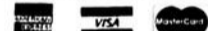
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Opinion

Ready for 2007?



Commentary

Wayne
LARSEN
larsenw@transcontinental.ca

Looking back over the past year and its wide variety of news events, both serious and bizarre, it is difficult to foresee what is in store for us in 2007. Nevertheless, here are a few items that just might make their way into the pages of *The Examiner* in the coming year.

HE'S BACK: In the boldest political comeback since Camillien Houde, former Montreal mayor Pierre Bourque will run in the provincial election on the ADQ's anti-agglomeration ticket. He will proudly point out that this is Quebec, where anything is possible. "Megacity, shmegacity," he will tell reporters. "Hey, you never know."

ZAPPED: Always eager to adopt new technology, Public Security officers will be authorized to carry TASER guns as standard equipment. But instead of midnight patrols in Westmount Park, they prove most effective on the city's meanest streets—Greene and Victoria Avenues—where overly rude motorists get zapped for protesting parking tickets.

ON THE CHARTS: City councillor George Bowser will record his first solo album, 'Am I Blue?' Among the selection of Bowser-ized cover tunes will be 'Blue Monday', 'Tangled Up in Blue' and 'Ricky Don't Lose That Number'.

QUIET, PLEASE: The 30-metre sound barrier prototype at the foot of Abbott Avenue will be deemed a great success by residents and City officials alike. "I can't hear a thing," one elated resident will tell an Examiner reporter. "What? I said I can't hear anything... Did you say something?! What?! Hello?!"

MATCH OF THE DAY: The Westmount Park turf controversy will be settled by a soccer game between the City's Sports & Recreation Department and members of Save the Park/Sauvons le Parc. After a close match filled with plenty of penalty shots and head butts, the City will win by one point—prompting a protest that the condition of the playing surface was too poor for a fair game.

RECORD BREAKER: Westmount's own political boulevardier Stanley Baker will be invited to enter the Guinness Book of World Records for his membership in the most community organizations and clubs. Unfortunately, his candidacy will be withdrawn when it is discovered that he is also a member of the Guinness selection committee and therefore ineligible.

2006 YEAR IN REVIEW



A quick year in review



On the Scene

With cops and criminals all getting ready for a quiet holiday season, On the Scene looks back on the year that was in Westmount police and security.

Dawson shooting

The biggest event of the year was, of course, the tragic Sept. 13 shooting spree at Dawson College.

Police from all over the city reported quickly to the local Cegep, with Westmount's Station 12 crew right there along with their colleagues. Westmount Public Security officers were among the first officials to make it to Dawson while the shooter was still prowling the hallways of the school.

"The truth is that our people were on the scene without knowing if they were safe or not. Our job is to support police and help keep the streets of Westmount safe, but not really to be in the line of fire," said security head Richard Blondin.

"Our people decided to put their own lives on the line for the students and I commend them for it."

Public Security officers were presented with special awards by the City of Westmount later in the year.

Watch your wallets

As recently reported in many major news outlets, Montreal is a hub of telemarketing and mail order scams.

That type of activity hit close to home late this year as a woman from Michigan was defrauded of close to \$3,000 by people using a Westmount address.

"(The scammers) said she had to pay a \$2,820.29 government tax bill for it to be transferred to her. They claimed it as an administration fee and asked her to send it via Western Union," said Station 12 officer Adalbert Pimentel.

"They also said that instead of getting the Cadillac, they could send her the cash value of the car instead for an administrative fee of \$1,400 on top of that. She lost everything."

Here and there...

Westmount saw its share of typical activity with police, fire and security responding to the standard gas leaks here and break-ins there. A major fire occupied local officials in

mid-September, while earlier that month a break-in at the neighbourhood SAQ caught the attention of police.

"On Sept. 20, around 1 a.m., one of our patrol cars noticed a broken plate glass window at the SAQ location on Sherbrooke near Victoria," said Blondin.

"Our officer saw a suspicious man wearing baggy clothing near the broken window and called the police.

"When the man saw our patrol car, he started walking west-bound on Sherbrooke, away from the store. Our patrolman followed him while the police were on their way. They intercepted the man at the north-west corner of Sherbrooke and Girouard and took him in."

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OLD NEWS from the archives

1935-2006

Five Years Ago
January 10, 2002

TOWARD DEMERGER: A committee of current and former elected officials from Westmount will be holding their first public meeting later this month to consider ways the borough can be made more autonomous within the new megacity. Last December, as Westmount city council was winding down its activity before the merger with the City of Montreal came into place Jan. 1, former mayor Peter Trent announced that a committee working towards de-merging Westmount on the megacity would begin sitting in the new year.

Ten Years Ago
December 23, 1996

STATION FOR SALE: "The old Westmount train station is for sale, and like it or not, the City doesn't want it. Because a majority of residents in a referendum last year opposed the rezoning of the site to accommodate a new protective services station, the train station, located on St. Catherine Street at the foot of Victoria, is of no use to the municipality, according to Mayor Peter Trent. CP once offered the site to the City for \$1, but without land, which Trent said would have cost something in the area of \$500,000."

Fifteen Years Ago
December 31, 1991

ROLLING DOWN BELMONT: "A runaway fuel oil truck careened driverless down Belmont avenue on Saturday morning, Dec. 21. The truck, its driver running after it, was laden with 1,500 gallons of home heating oil. It crossed Westmount avenue and continued down another block before crashing into a house at 72 Belmont crescent where Belmont avenue comes to an end. A large tree was mowed down outside the large greystone home of Dr. Raphael Evanson where the impact cracked interior walls, damaged floors and dislodged the fireplace in the living room, police said."

Thirty-Five Years Ago
December 30, 1971

OUMET SLAMS BUDGET: "Mayor Paul Ouimet has come out strongly against the Montreal Urban Community budget, believing that not enough attention has been paid to cutting costs and that the suburbs were unfairly hit with police costs without being consulted. 'Nobody seems interested in cutting expenses,' he said, 'and the MUC must learn to live within its means.' He said he was seriously concerned with the rising costs of MUC services and added that this year's MUC budget was nearly 50 percent greater than the previous budget."

Forty-Five Years Ago
December 22, 1961

COP'S STRETCH REDUCED: "Former Westmount police constable Stanley Easton had an armed holdup conviction against him reduced to simple theft, and his five year sentence cut to two years, by the Quebec Court of Appeal. At his trial earlier this year in connection with a \$400 holdup at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in April, 1960, the 30-year-old father of three children was held to have been equally guilty with his armed accomplice."



Civic Alert

Don WEDGE

Westmounters' eclectic lives are fodder for novels, but in real life they are often reticent to talk about their lives and interests. I set out to discover the Big Moments of 2006 from some of the more public citizens. Many have multiple active interests, often incorporating community concerns.

One such is Dr. Henry Olders, the president of the Westmount Municipal Association. A psychiatrist commuting to work in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, he lives on Lansdowne with his wife, Helen Rainville.

"With the warmth of our community, caring friends, and the love of family: we are truly blessed" is how Olders summarized 2006.

Their many interests are shown in his recollections of an eventful year — an extended family reunion, a week at music camp with Victoria, his grand-daughter, and a road trip to Lac St-Jean to meet friends and explore Helen's family roots.

"There was a special birthday party for Helen's fiftieth," Olders recalled, adding other special moments as "watching daughter Lisa's rugby games, celebrating with her being named to the 'Equipe des étoiles,' and listening to the joy in the voice of our youngest, Becky, as she recounts her experiences in first year medicine."

The city overflows with similar recollections in many families.

Marks's memories

Someone who spent her year trying to ensure that the city is able to continue providing the support that allows such activities to flourish was Karin Marks, who in addition to her own family cares and responsibilities, became Westmount's second woman mayor and was chosen by her peers to lead all the mayors of reconstituted cities.

Four things stand out for her. The Best Moment, not surprisingly, was January 1 — first day of the new city. The worst was Dec. 15 when the National Assembly adjourned without legislation to improve the Agglom.

The budgets at the beginning and end of the year brought a "wonderful moment" to the mayor. "It leads to us being able to reduce the tax — locally, at least — for the first time in five years."

Her most heart-warming moment, though, was the council meeting and the city's party for the retiring Public Works Director Fred Caluori. "They were wonderful reminders of how loyal our employees are and how citizens appreciate our staff."

For Caluori, the Big Moment was that retirement and the events that went with it.

"It was very emotional," the 36-year city veteran recalled. "I was very touched that my whole family, including my parents, could attend."

Caluori qualified for retirement some years ago, but waited until Westmount was a

The year's Big Moments in Westmounters' lives

city again. "We have a non-bureaucratic way of doing things," he said. "The megacity was so frustrating, particularly over infrastructure projects where one seemed to be fighting from within."

Day-to-day services were largely untouched by the megacity, but the administrative impact was enormous. Westmount's Director-General Bruce St Louis had the toughest task given the reporting structure imposed on him.

"I will never forget the almost overwhelming sense of relief that came over me at one minute past midnight on January 1," said the city's top civil servant, breaking his usual reticence about his involvement in events.

"After four years of that borough nonsense and seeing the toll it took on both the City and my staff, I was a very happy man indeed to once again be the 'City' of Westmount D-G."

Dawson shooting

"The other significant event — how can one ever forget — was the Dawson College crisis on September 13. I was at the police command post listening to the breaking events on the radios as they occurred. Something that I thought could never, and would never, happen in our city was unfolding before us and the world.

"And in the middle of it all was a small contingent of Westmount Public Security personnel who put their own safety on the line to assist victims, police, Urgences Santé and the students who were being evacuated.

"I was never as proud of a group of employees as I was that day; they did Westmount proud."

The Dawson shooting impacted many families, including at the *Examiner*. Editor Wayne Larsen's sister-in-law, a Dawson employee at the time, was trapped in a room with her co-workers just a few metres from the gunman.

His son, Nikolas, a first-year student, was near the atrium when the shooting began, but was able to get out in time. No wonder Larsen regards the incident as the biggest story of his nine years at the paper! He applauds reporter Charles Montgomery for his coverage, including several award-worthy pictures.

Permaculture vacation

The Community Events Office, based in Victoria Hall, is responsible for supporting many functions that single out the city from others. For several years, because of family illness, co-coordinator Maureen Lafrenière had not felt able to travel during her vacation leaves. In 2006, she was free to spend two weeks living on a farm near Norway, Maine — her Big Moment. She sawed down a tree and guided the draft horse that dragged it to the sawmill.

The former secretary of the Healthy City Project's Environment Committee came away from Maine with an International Certificate in Permaculture Design.

"That," she explained, "is about designing a human habitat that follows the pattern of nature and that can sustain itself."

Jerusalem defended

Of all the commentators on municipal life, the Gazette's controversial Civic Affairs Columnist Henry Aubin, brings a rare intellectual look. This month he named Megamayor Gerald Tremblay as "Person of the Year" — most influential for his "immobilism," a current buzz-word for not getting big things done.

What kind of Big Moment had 2006 brought for him? The answer was as surprising as his columns: finishing a novel.

"I've been working on an historical novel for teens, 'Rise of the Golden Cobra,' off and on for 19 years. So finishing the last of many drafts in November was quite a high point. It'll be out in February.

"It's also about the Nubian army that took over Egypt in the 8th century BC to defend it from Assyrian invasion. There are lots of battles, treachery and chivalry I could never make this stuff up."

Aubin is already the author of "The Rescue of Jerusalem" about the alliance between Hebrews and Africans in 701 B.C.

Park protector

Community involvement is not static. Dawson College teacher Patrick Barnard has lived in the city for some years, but has stepped forward only recently over the plans to cover part of Westmount Park with artificial turf.

Continued on page 10

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•Some residents were concerned by the sight of black tar-like spots on the leaves of many maple trees. City horticulturalist Claudette Savaria reassured everyone that the disease was not fatal and was only restricted to the leaves themselves. "Because of the wet spring we had, and the very humid conditions we had this summer, the disease developed quite severely this year compared to last year," she said of the condition, which was most evident on the mountain.

•August's city council meeting was highlighted by a tribute to Fred Caluori, the popular director of Public Works who would soon be retiring after 36 years of service to the City of Westmount. "If you tell Fred the sky is falling, he just picks it up," said city councillor George Bowser. "And may I say he does it in a cost-efficient and sustainable way."

September

•The 6Westmount Historical Association announced that its fall lecture series would be based around the subject of building restoration. The lectures were presented under the collective title "Restoring of Homes in Westmount: Preserving the Original Character of our Architectural Heritage."

•Congregation Shaar Hashomayim hosted guest speaker Elizabeth May, newly elected leader of the Green Party, whose timely lecture, delivered on Sept. 11, was 'In An Insecure World, Are We Identifying the Right Threat?'

•The eyes of the world were on Westmount on Sept. 13, when a crazed gunman opened fire on students at Dawson College. The entire area was blocked off as



Tragedy strikes at Dawson College

hundreds of students and staff were evacuated and police tried to determine the extent of the situation. After a long afternoon of rumours and hearsay, it was finally determined that there was one gunman, who was killed by police officers at the scene—but not

before killing one student and wounding at least 19 others.

Less than a week later, on the following Monday, students 'took back' their school and returned to class, but it was pointed out that the recovery process would be long and

difficult. The City of Westmount praised its employees—particularly Public Security officers—for their bravery and efficient handling of the crisis.

•Residents of Roslyn Avenue above Sherbrooke were awakened to a three-alarm fire at 503 Roslyn Ave. in the early morning hours of Sept. 21. The street was jammed for several hours with emergency vehicles, as 16 trucks and 70 firefighters responded to the call. There were no major injuries in the blaze, which sent smoke billowing out over the entire downtown area.

•Despite a good deal of debate over the City of Westmount's proposal to pass a bylaw banning medical practices in residential buildings, the bid for a referendum on the matter fell through when only five residents signed the register—47 short of the required 52 signatures required for a referendum.

•Residents of the Alexis Nihon apartment tower complained to city council that their building was being advertised as a hotel—an infraction of the municipal bylaw that forbids hotels in Westmount. Tenant John Johnston told council that this was not a new phenomenon, and that a hotel classification would prove costly to tenants, whose insurance premiums would likely increase.

•A series of public demonstrations by animal rights activists in front of two Westmount homes had many neighbours worried, prompting Station 12 police and Westmount Public Security to keep a close eye on the situation. The residents of the two homes, on Victoria and Roslyn avenues, were said to be associated with a company that experiments on animals.



Cross-Canada cyclists Ryan Stotland and Daniel Kliger arrive in St. John's, Newfoundland

2006: THE YEAR IN REVIEW



Former mayor Peter Trent pays tribute to retiring Public Works director Fred Caluori

in a community park," said Mavis Young of Melville Avenue, one of the protesters. "We feel the community wouldn't be able to access the space."

•A new cultural event was born when a few community volunteers organized Art Westmount—a two-day event that had more than 40 local artists exhibiting their work in their own spaces, from studios to small galleries. The event was organized as a tour, with visitors given a map of Westmount showing the various locations where artists were exhibiting.

•The Westmount Public Library played host to author Ravi Hauge, who dropped by to read from his first novel, *De Niro's Game*—which had recently been nominated for the prestigious Giller Prize.

•City councillor George Bowser announced the City's intention to restore Sunnyside Park, just below the Summit lookout. In an *Examiner* column, Bowser outlined the plans to cut down some trees and prune others in order to restore the view from the lookout. This was necessary, he said, in order to restore the park to its former state.

•The students of Roslyn School reached a significant milestone—\$100,000 raised for cancer research. This was the total sum raised over five years through annual Terry Fox runs organized by caretaker Eddie Nolan. This year, combined donations amounted to no less than \$25,000.

•A very muddy—but very happy—Selwyn House bantam football team beat Lower Canada college to win the GMAA championship in their category in an exciting game plagued by wet field conditions and bitter cold.

•The City's annual Halloween home decorating contest attracted many participants, with lots of creepy creativity. In lower Westmount, winner Mark Camacho edged out neighbour Beverley Leblanc, who had won the two previous years. North of Sherbrooke Street, the Cohen family of Murray Hill Avenue took first prize. Second prize went to Joanne Gurman of Roxborough Avenue and Penny Polak of Prospect Street, while the third prize was awarded to Heather Zipkin of Forden Crescent and the MacDougall family of Prince Albert Avenue.

October

•The City of Westmount's idea to cover the surface of Westmount Park's playing fields with artificial turf was met with vehe-

ment opposition by several residents, primarily those living across the street on Melville Avenue. An ad hoc group named Save the Park was formed to fight the plan. "We don't like the idea of putting any synthetic covering

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Continued from CIVIC ALERT, page 7

He and his wife, Marilyn Gillis, contributed a three-part Big Moment — October 3, when council held an information meeting about the project, October 7 when the Barnards and friends formed the Save the Park group “almost spontaneously.” Since then, their petition has attracted 700 names.

Barnard is proud of his research into the park and has discovered that 100 years ago, Alderman J.H. Sherrard led council through the provision of \$300,000 to buy land on the southern side of Westmount Park.

His natural irony emphasized the word “Park.”

Rotary champion
Few can begin to match Jim Griffin's contribution to the city. He is not only well-known as the head of the family plumbing business his grandfather founded, but as a community activist, too.

The year brought him the opportunity to be president of Westmount Rotary Club again — the first person in its history who has held the office twice, the initial time being 20 years ago.

“The opportunity to serve in Rotary is very important to me and was the Big Moment of the year. I am very impressed with all the things it has been able to do around the world. Here I remember the wheelchairs we were able to supply, and there is always the Manoir, which cares for so many people.”

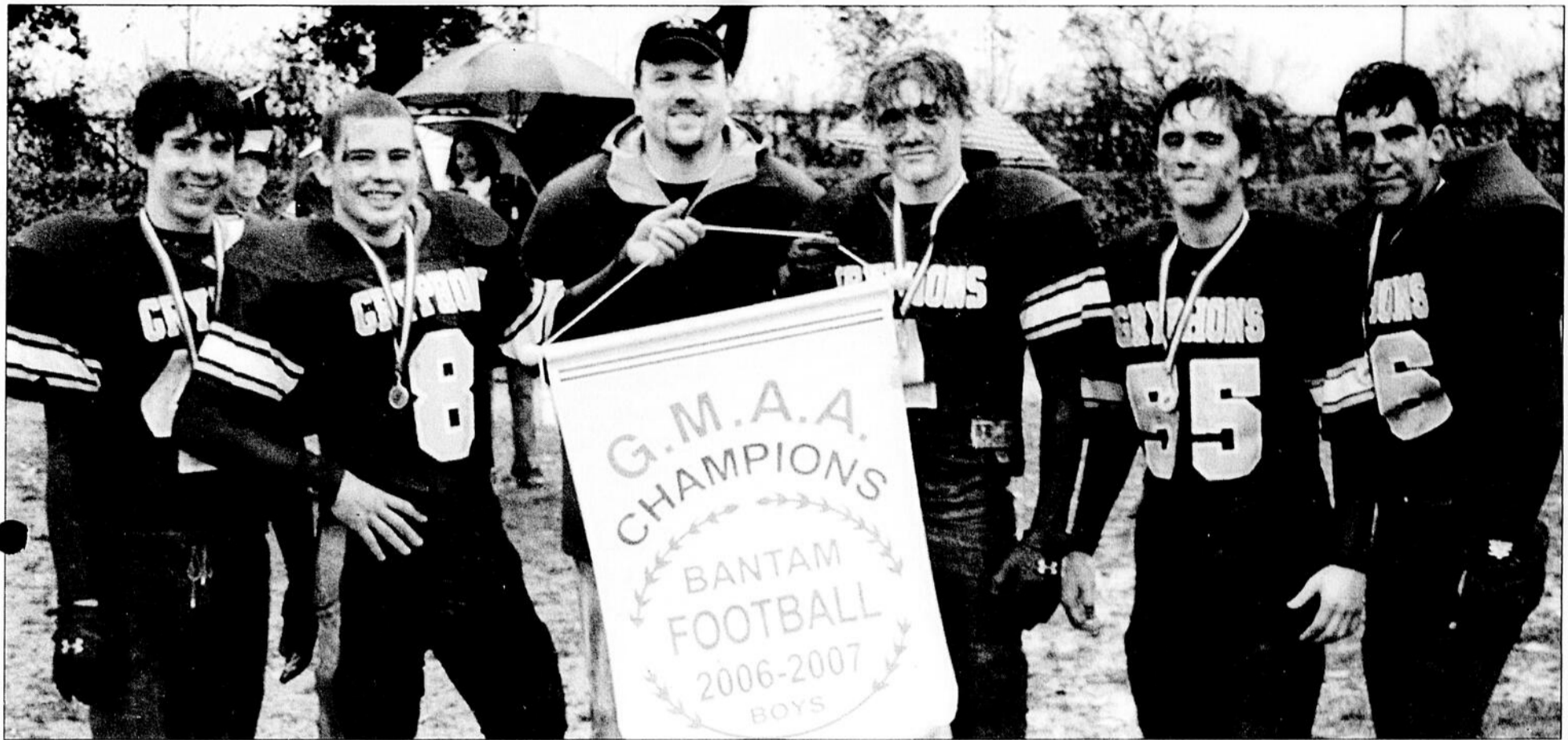
Personal note
As for Don Wedge, my big thrills have been the visits of our daughters, Roberta and Joanna, as well as grandson, Sebastian Crawley. The birth of Sophie Wedge was enhanced by a wonder of the age when family pictures arrive the same day they are taken. Wife Sylvia was only away once in the UK this year and there was only one midnight ambulance ride to the Royal Vic.

I greatly appreciate the readers of Civic Alert, including those who occasionally criticize, and I am enormously grateful to those whose support makes it possible each week. I'm no entertainer, but I struggle to inform and explain.

My poor prose would not be readable without some tough editing before even the Examiner editor sees my copy. Weekly, two critical volunteers separately and together, turn the sow's ear into something I hope you find acceptable, even if not a silk purse.

• Community activist Don Wedge can be reached at calert@web.net. His columns are archived at www.westmountexaminer.com, go to Opinion.

SEND THE EDITOR AN E-MAIL:
larsenw@transcontinental.ca



Selwyn House School's bantam Gryphons football team came out on top in 2006

November

•Quebec Lieutenant Governor Lise Thibault was one of several dignitaries on hand to officially open a new ramp at the entrance of St. Léon de Westmount Church. The ornate ramp, built of stone and concrete, was installed to provide easier access to the church for disabled and elderly parishioners. "This is a facility that meets people's needs," said Father Yves Guillemette, St. Léon's pastor.

•Still recovering from its recent tragedy, Dawson College announced the construction of a new theatre and the expansion of its atrium. The project would include a 192-seat Elizabethan theatre to be used by the college's acclaimed professional theatre department, which has been mounting its productions at the Dome Theatre in St. Henri.

•The holiday season was ushered in with the annual Artisan Festival, which transformed Victoria Hall into a colourful haven with handicrafts of all descriptions. No less than 34 artisans gathered to offer the public an eclectic array of wares. "People are saying it's the best show we ever had," said Ilyse Segal, who co-organizes the event each year with Flora-Lee Wagner.

•Eleven months after a fire forced them out of their condo building at the corner of de Maisonneuve and Melville Avenue, displaced residents had still not been allowed to return home. "It's been almost a year now," said an exasperated Robert David. "They have not seen fit to rebuild the building; they're just ignoring us at this point." David and several of his fellow residents cited the building's insurance company for the unreasonably long delays.

•The TAG Teen Centre celebrated a significant milestone—10 years of existence in the community. Under the guidance of director Jared MacSween, the gang celebrated with a couple of birthday cakes at their current headquarters in the Westmount Arena.

•The City of Westmount announced that this winter the outdoor skating experience will be enhanced by a new addition to the Public Works inventory—a mini-Zamboni device that would resurface the city's outdoor rinks. "It's actually an attachment that will fit on the front of one of our tractors," said City councillor George Bowser, Westmount's commissioner of public works.

December

•Frustrated by the 2007 agglomeration budget, which again raises taxes in the demerged cities, Mayor Karin Marks and her fellow mayors of demerged cities decided to boycott the agglomeration meetings—at least

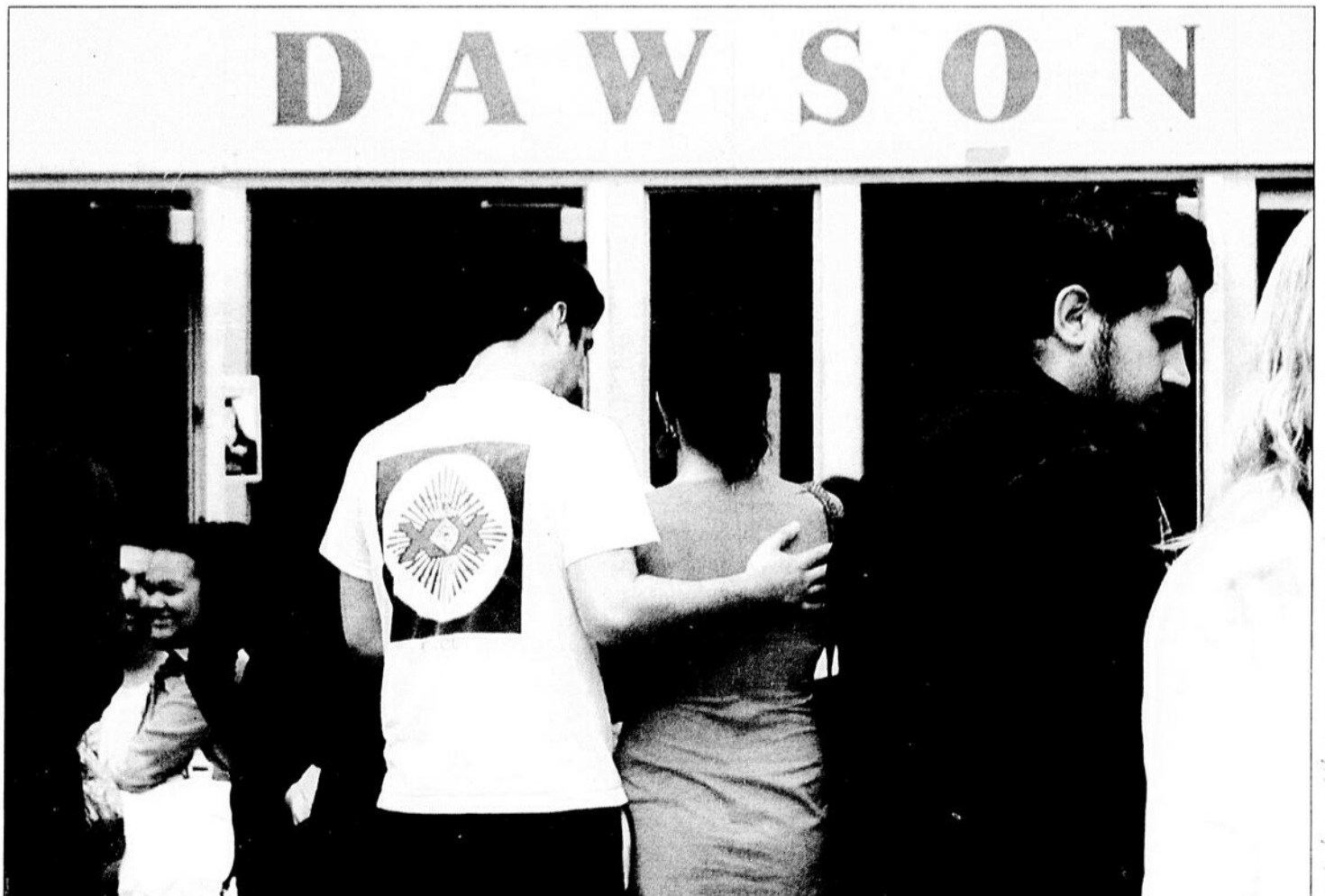
until Municipal Affairs Minister Nathalie Normandeau takes action to create a more democratic system.

"The Quebec government has created a structure that we consider to be unfair and unjust," said Marks. "And yesterday's budget—which shocked us all—has once again proved that the executive committee has the ability to abuse their power and to exercise a conflict of interest in transferring the increase in budget, the increase in taxes to our residents, in order to fulfill their promises to the Montreal residents," Marks said.

•Public outcry over the Sunnyside Park refurbishing came to a climax when several residents saw the extent of the tree-cutting operation beneath the Summit lookout. One

Examiner reader called it a "chainsaw massacre" while others expressed their shock at how many trees had actually been felled—120 in all. Mayor Marks was quick to explain the City's position that the cutting was necessary to restore the park to its original state.

•The City of Westmount presented its 2007 municipal operating budget, and while property taxes on the average Westmount home were lowered by 1.34 per cent, a 4.09 rise in agglomeration taxes meant that Westmounters would be paying nearly 2 per cent more in property taxes than last year. In all, owners of the average single-family dwelling in Westmount will be receiving a combined tax bill of \$9,872 in 2007.



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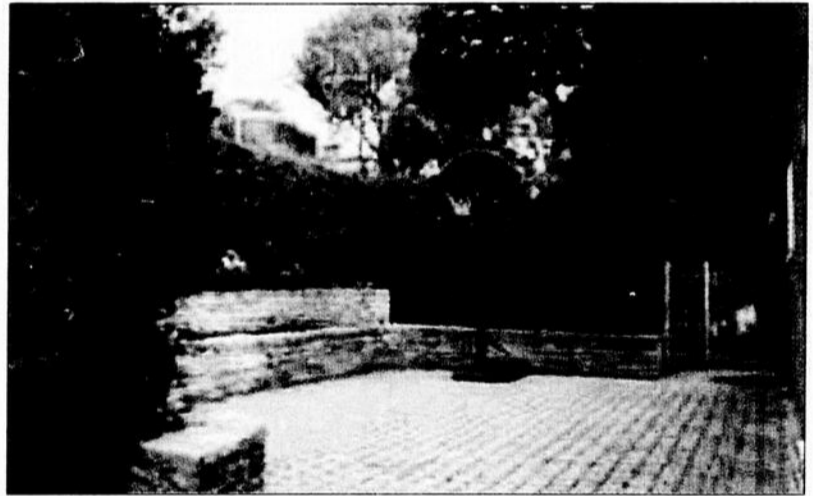
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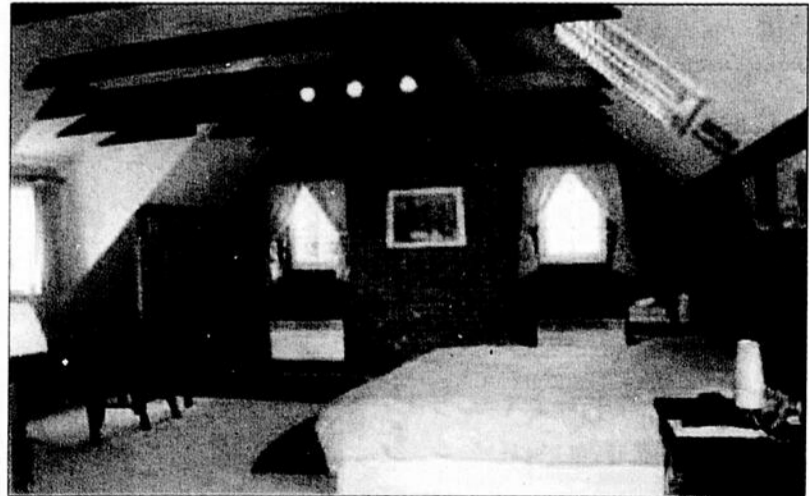
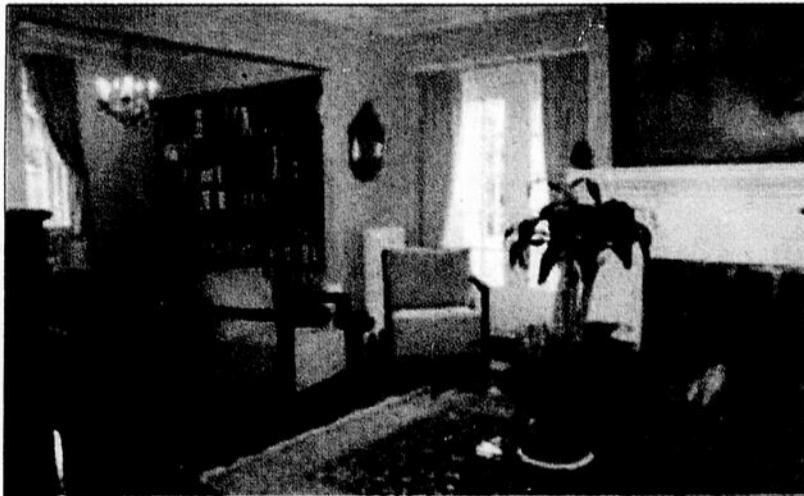
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