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Post 17c: What's it like being a councillor One resident's view

In reply to the “*Candidates wanted, No experience necessary*” post of March 14, **Deborah Hayek** was curious about the time commitment to being a councillor, and what was involved. Councillor Liz Ulin agreed to publish a description in the May Informer, but since that's two months away, here are a few personal observations from the perspective of a long-time resident – for what it's worth.

What do councillors do? Councillors and the mayor are responsible for issues of concern to the community by setting policy and orientations, developing initiatives, and passing bylaws. The upcoming pilot project to improve traffic safety on Westminster is an example of council responding to community concerns. Council and the mayor sometimes provide a broader vision, as was the case with the new rec center. Areas of community interest generally fall within the 7 portfolios managed by our four councillors. (Day-to-day functioning of the Town is handled by the Town bureaucracy and staff, which ensures continuity even when there are inexperienced representatives in a portfolio.)

The 7 portfolios: Councillors hold up to 3 portfolios, which are occasionally switched; some portfolios also involve associated committee membership:

- *Public Security* (also Community Safety Committee membership)
- *Public Works & Buildings*
- *Communications & Environment* (also Environmental Action Committee membership)
- *Finance*
- *MADA* (Seniors Advisory Committee membership)
- *Recreation & Culture*
- *Urban Planning* (PAC membership).

Each councillor is a member of 1 or 2 committees which meet regularly; for example, *16 Planning Advisory Committee (PAC)* meetings are scheduled for 2025.

Activities: The *11 yearly council meetings* – every month except July – average around 1.5 hours. For each meeting there is a pre-meeting caucus and preparation of answers to online questions which may require consultation with Town staff. Follow-up to questions is sometimes required. Potential candidates would be well-served to view a few council meetings on the link below.

In 2024 there were *16 special meetings* which are much shorter and don't involve a question period. Other meetings may occasionally involve Town departments and citizen groups such as the board of the adult library.

Add in various enjoyable civic functions to attend – such as Canada Day and Jean Baptiste, and Informer “Council Communiques” to be written. Depending on the portfolio, time can be spent responding to residents' emails, with rare in-person meetings.

2023 Salaries:

Councillors: \$13,647 + \$6,824 (expenses)

Mayor: \$34,114 + \$17,057 (expenses)

Plus 2% per year pension and usually inflation-tied salary increases.

Liz will no doubt have deeper, experience-based insights.

Videos of council meetings: <https://montreal-west.ca/en/our-town/town-council/public-meetings/>

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Post 17b: Past election platforms What's been completed?

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Residents making the decision to run for council or mayor face creating a platform; what issues are of concern to the Town? For the five elections from 2005 to 2021, eleven issues appeared more than twice in election platforms published in The Informer:

- *Infrastructure* (20 mentions)
- *high taxes* (19)
- *traffic safety* (14)
- *seniors' residence & programs* (11)
- *transparency* (8)
- *new rec center* (8)
- *revitalizing Westminster* (7)
- *the environment/trees* (6)
- *the debt* (5)
- *improved/maintain services* (4)
- *Meadowbrook greenspace preservation* (4)

(Acclaimed councillors usually set out a platform; a few candidates have none. Data in the [link](#) below.)

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The *new rec center* will open this fall; *recreational/cultural services* have greatly expanded; *Meadowbrook*, though still under threat from developers' lawsuits, is in a much safer position; *seniors' programs* and *MADA* accreditation have been addressed, but the much-hoped-for seniors' residence lost its last proposed site to the Easton project; the *Environmental Action Committee* has had some notable accomplishments the latest being a consultants' study of bike path possibilities budgeted for this year and the wood-burning stove & fireplace bylaw coming into force in 2026.

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Revitalizing Westminster has defeated past councils as attracting exciting retail businesses is hindered by some astronomical rents and a small local consumer market – which is evidenced by two businesses up for sale and a third micro-space again up for rent. Regrettably, a landscape architects' report commissioned to develop ideas to make the street more attractive has been misplaced – as I discovered after filing an access to information request!

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Transparency, as I recall, referred to a lack of knowledge of what was going on in our municipal affairs and the different issues facing the Town. Credit should be given to past councils for initiating the “*Council Communiques*” (the yellow pages) in The Informer which have been illuminating. Lately, transparency has taken on a new dimension involving requests for public release of traffic and speed bump reports, the infrastructure priority list and lead-in-water measurements – if only on a block-by-block basis.

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After regular *infrastructure renewal* throughout the 2010s – see [link](#) below, there has been only one project in the six years from 2020 through 2025. Courtney Drive is planned for 2026, but in future the *debt* – which is set to double, grant availability, and *high taxes* will likely hamper infrastructure investment. After a final tax hit funding the rec center in the 2026 budget, the best we can probably hope for is tax increases close to inflation.

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Some marginal increases in the tax base are expected from the Easton condos, the expanded U-Haul facility, and the future housing project at the old RBC site (Westminster & Milner). Additional hiring and operating cost increases at the rec center may diminish anticipated increased revenues.

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Lastly, *traffic safety* related to the Westminster crosswalks and train crossing may be improved with the upcoming pilot project, but the changes described in recent council meetings – the left-hand turn bans, two pedestrian islands and an apparent reduction to single lanes on part of Westminster – may prove in part unworkable.

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Past platform data & graphs:

https://www.montreal-west.com/files/ugd/f79513_e61e34989b184a348ff1d2b8d11536bb.pdf

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Infrastructure renewal 2009 to 2025:

https://www.montreal-west.com/files/ugd/f79513_068a78d25382462ea7d38f6b25b3fdb0.pdf

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Post 17a Candidates wanted No experience necessary

Municipal elections are just over 7 months away (November 02), and rumours are that the mayor and as many as 3 of the 4 councillors are considering or intending to move on. This is well-deserved as one councillor will have served for 20 years, the mayor 18 years, a second councillor 16 years – excluding a break in 2009, and a third councillor 12 years. The fourth councillor was elected in 2021 and will surely be running again.

The present council has had a deep commitment to the Town, accomplished much and served us well. Their centerpiece, the rec center, will be completed before the end of the current term, and other initiatives such as the seniors' project MADA, increased environmental awareness and actions, and expanded recreational and cultural programs have been successfully implemented. And the Westminster crosswalks and train crossing are receiving much deserved attention.

So, it's the perfect time to pass the torch.

Regular turnover is healthy since it broadens the base of residents with first-hand experience of issues facing the Town. Each councillor also has their own network of friends, neighbours and acquaintances who benefit from knowledge shared during informal social interactions.

The election will be an opportunity to welcome a younger generation of councillors with different perspectives, skills, ideas, and ways of thinking.

A lack of experience is not a barrier as we are fortunate to have a well-functioning bureaucracy taking care of business. Every councillor comes in without experience; former Mayor Campbell Stuart had not even served as a councillor, and Mayor Masella was a councillor for only 2 years before becoming mayor.

Making a decision to run is not easy and takes time. To inspire people to run I would encourage our current representatives to declare their intentions as soon as possible in the way that Mayors Christina Smith (Westmount) and Valerie Plante have done, and not leave decisions until the summer. This would allow potential candidates to emerge sooner.

An excellent letter from resident Brian Benedetti: **The importance of participating in local government** appeared in the March 2025 Informer page 4.

https://montreal-west.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-02-23-Informer-February_web-1.pdf

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**Post 16 d: How might potential buyers view our tax premium?
As an opportunity cost, or a mortgage equivalent, or both?**

(This is the last of a 4-part series shining a light on our tax situation and its impact. It's not a comment on present or past councils.)

Astute potential buyers might view our tax premium in two ways. As an **opportunity cost** when comparing to houses in other towns having similar tax-valuations and realizing what our premium might instead be spent on. (An opportunity cost is a lost or forfeited opportunity.)

For example, a MoWest house with a tax valuation of \$1.3M pays a premium of **\$4.9K (407\$/month)** over a house of same tax-valuation in NDG. The lost opportunities for this money might include: an additional contribution to a child's college fund (RESP), paying off braces in 2 or 3 years, tuition to a private Cegep such as Marianopolis, a charitable donation, a yearly contribution to a family vacation or activities, home improvements every 4 or 5 years, a good contribution to parents' annual getaway to Europe, etc., etc.

(MoWesters opening their property tax bills every January may have a twinge of opportunity cost regret as well before accepting the premium as the "cost of doing business".)

A second view of our tax premium is as a **mortgage equivalent** when buyers are crunching the operating costs of a MoWest purchase and how large a mortgage they can afford.

That 407\$/month tax premium is like carrying a small mortgage, *without the gain in equity as it's paid off*. Were the premium much reduced they would have a bit of breathing room against mortgage rate increases. Or be able to take out a larger loan to finance upfront renovations and upgrades, or have the flexibility to make a higher offer if necessary.

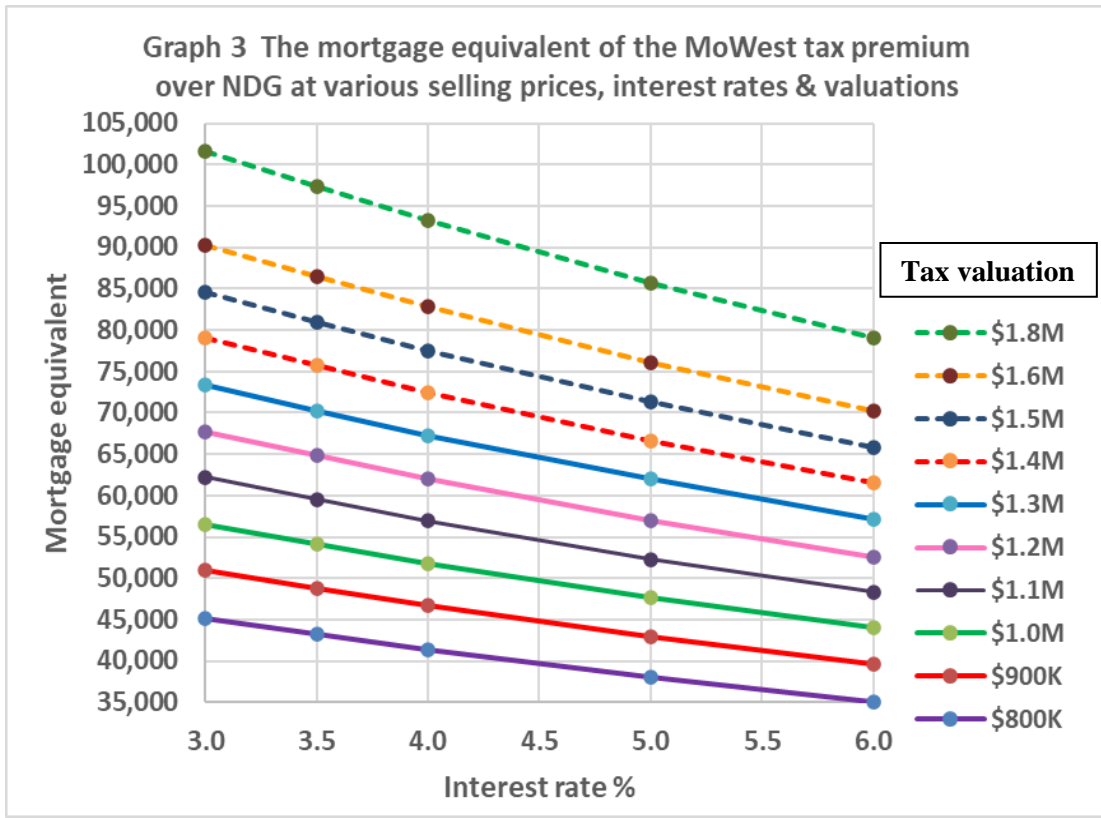
How large is the mortgage equivalent of the tax premium? For the earlier example, at a **5%** mortgage rate (20 year amortization, fixed for 5-year term) the 407\$/month premium is equivalent to a **\$62K** mortgage. At a **3%** rate it's **\$73.5K**, or healthy kitchen and bathroom renovations.

The mortgage equivalent becomes more significant at lower interest rates. **Graph 3** shows the upward rise of mortgage equivalent values for interest rates from 6% down to 3% for a variety of house tax-valuations. (Lines on the graph represent different tax-valuations.) At the upper end, the **\$6.8K** tax premium of a house tax-valued at **\$1.8M** has a mortgage equivalent of **\$101.6K** when interest rates are **3%**!

Unless they're coming from high priced areas such as Toronto or Vancouver, or benefitting from the current generational transfer of wealth, it's no wonder some buyers find our tax premium a bit daunting. Buyers *do* get more for their money than NDG because of our under-performing market, but this is small consolation to sellers who haven't discounted their price appropriately.

Methodology: I used a BMO mortgage renewal rate calculator to avoid down payments, and trial and error. The aim was to find what loan amount would produce a monthly mortgage payment equal a particular monthly tax premium for a 20 year amortization, and fixed rate for 5 years.

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Valuation	Tax Premium		Mortgage equivalent: 5 year fixed, 20 years				
	Yearly	Monthly	Interest rate (%)				
			3.0	3.5	4.0	5.0	6.0
800,000	3,002	250.2	45,200	43,200	41,400	38,000	35,100
900,000	3,378	281.5	51,000	48,700	46,700	42,900	39,600
1,000,000	3,753	312.8	56,500	54,100	51,800	47,700	44,000
1,100,000	4,128	344.0	62,200	59,500	56,900	52,300	48,300
1,200,000	4,504	375.3	67,700	64,800	62,000	57,000	52,600
1,300,000	4,879	406.6	73,450	70,250	67,300	62,000	57,100
1,400,000	5,254	437.9	79,100	75,700	72,500	66,600	61,500
1,500,000	5,630	469.1	84,650	81,000	77,550	71,400	65,800
1,600,000	6,005	500.4	90,250	86,400	82,800	76,100	70,200
1,800,000	6,755	563.0	101,600	97,300	93,200	85,700	79,000

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Post 16 c: Have high taxes affected our real estate market?

(The purpose of this series of 4 posts is to shine a light on our tax situation and its impact. It's not a comment on present or past councils.)

High taxes are not just high taxes; there are secondary effects. A resident last December wondered: “At what differential will families stop buying houses in MoWest?” Is there a tipping point? Perhaps Bill had in mind the observation about bankruptcy in Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*: “How do you go bankrupt?” “Two ways. Gradually and then suddenly.”

By itself, our real estate market might appear to be doing well. It reached a record high median selling price of \$1,130,000 in 2024, though with the third lowest sales volume since 2000. But, its performance relative to other local markets tells a different story.

Relative performance can be gauged by examining the ratio of other towns’ median selling prices to MoWest’s over time. If the ratios are increasing, then higher-priced towns are pulling away from us, and lower-priced towns ones catching up. If the ratios are decreasing, then our market is performing better.

Such an analysis shows that **our real estate market has been under-performing with respect to 13 other local towns** since 2006.**

Graphs 1 & 2 for NDG, and Beaconsfield and Kirkland plot the ratios of their median selling prices to MoWest’s (expressed as percentages) for the 18 years from 2006 to 2024. The 3 graphs have distinct upward trends indicating that Beaconsfield and Kirkland have been catching up, and NDG at first catching up and then pulling away. *All other towns display the same upward slopes.*

The numerical slopes of the dotted trendlines on the graphs, which are lines that best describe the average trend of the data, can be used to quantitatively show that NDG’s relative performance has improved by **22.8%** over the 18 years. And Beaconsfield and Kirkland by **16.6%** and **17.5%**.

Though our closest competitor NDG has had an envious relative growth, excluding TMR – which had a growth of **47.1%** relative to MoWest, **the average relative growth was 11.1%**. Though hardly an earth-shattering average, it’s still irksome that we’re worse than all other towns.

But are high taxes the cause, or are they simply correlating with poor performance?

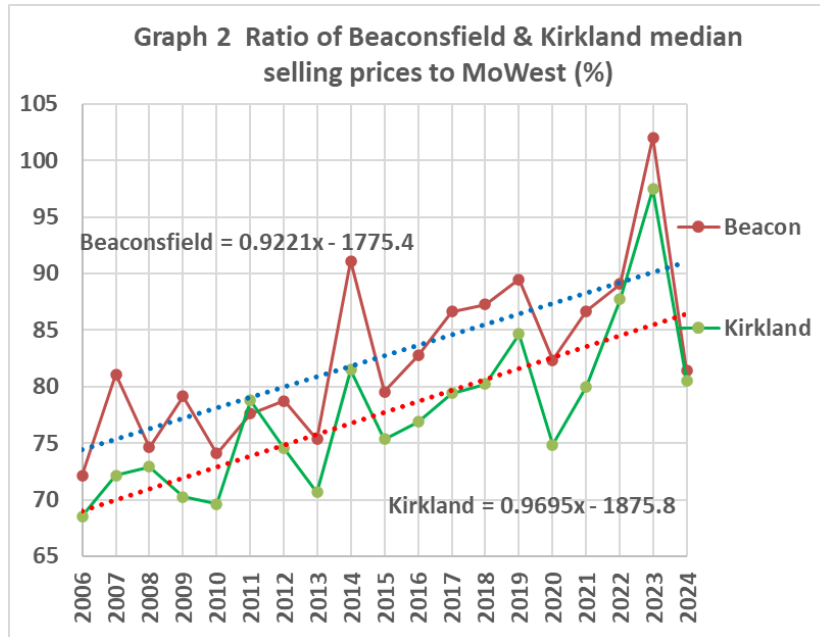
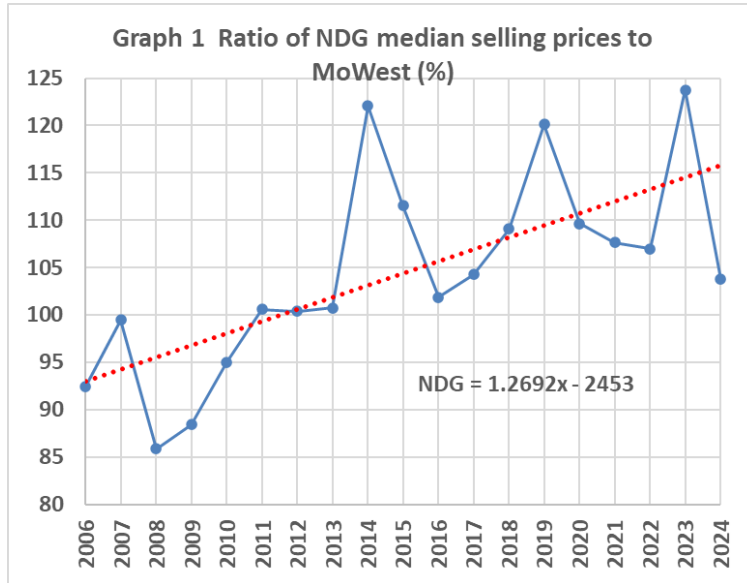
What factors influence a buyer’s decision? Montreal West has many fine attributes: good neighbourhood schools and pre-schools, convenient location & transportation links, outstanding recreational & cultural programs, interesting & friendly neighbours, a pleasing variety of well-kept houses with good curb appeal, a pleasant tree canopy, etc. *We don’t appear to have any negatives other than high taxes (and some horrible roads).*

To return to the resident’s question, it’s doubtful that there will be a crash, only that our selling prices will continue to be discounted due to the tax premium. Buyers may be “getting more for their money” than elsewhere – as one argument goes, but at the expense of sellers who have to lower their prices to stimulate demand. Which is of little comfort for residents wishing, or having, to sell.

**TMR, NDG/CdN, Hampstead, CSL, Kirkland, Beaconsfield, Pointe Claire, Westmount, Baie d’Urfe, DDO, Lachine, Dorval, Perrefonds/Roxboro.

Post 16 d: How might potential buyers view our tax premium?

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Post 16b: How does the tax rate work?**Don't blame valuation increases!**

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Tax rates are essentially calculated as total town expenses divided by total property valuations, except for complications due to the different classes of property: residential, non-residential and vacant land. Rates naturally decrease over time since valuations tend to increase faster than a town's expenses, meaning the denominator grows faster than the numerator driving the rate down.

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The tax rate calculation is forgiving as it compensates for increases in valuations. For example, suppose valuations double with town expenses remaining constant. The doubled total valuation in the denominator of the rate calculation produces a new rate one-half of the old which completely offsets the doubled valuation increase.

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Taxes only increase when a town's expenses increase, and never due to valuation increases – unless your valuation increases more than the Town average, in which case you *will* pay more.

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Back in 2005 MoWest had a rate of **1.7535** with the average house valued at \$282,767, in 2025 it's **1.0126** with an average valuation of \$1,034,567. Valuations increased by a factor of 3.66, but were not the culprit. The 111% increase in taxes from \$4,958 to \$10,476 was due to a large increase in expenses. (FYI: The median selling price in 2005 was \$425,000 which increased 165.9% to \$1,130,000 in 2024.)

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People believing that valuation increases lead to tax increases often feel that valuation phase-ins of one-third of the increase each year of the triennial roll are the answer. Although promoted by CSL and some other towns, phase-ins simply give the illusion of avoiding pain by seemingly spreading it over 3 years. In fact, phase-ins lead to higher tax rates in the first two years due to the smaller denominator, and taxpayers pay exactly the same tax increase since a town's expenses have to be covered one way or another.

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To paraphrase an old, white playwright probably no longer relevant: "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our valuations, but in our expenses." (Shakespeare, Julius Caesar if you didn't recognize it.)

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Post 16 c considers how high taxes have affected the real estate market.

Post 16 d looks at the opportunity cost and mortgage equivalent of the tax premium.

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Post 16 a How do our taxes compare with other towns? February 26, 2025

(The purpose of this series of 4 posts is to shine a light on our tax situation and its impact. It's not a comment on present or past councils.)

With payment of the first installment, municipal taxes have recently been on many peoples' minds. And it's natural to wonder how our taxes stack up against other towns.

Table 1 gives 2025 tax rates for 12 other towns, the percentage that MoWest rates are above each of them, and the % contributions to the Agglomeration. MoWest clearly has the highest tax rate, but it's the percentage we are above other towns that provides the best comparison:

MoWest ranges from **19.4%** above CSL – the town closest to us, to **45.7%** above DDO, **73.8%** above Kirkland, and at the upper end **141.3%** above Dorval – which benefits greatly from taxes on the airport. Our situation is not helped by a small commercial tax base, like Hampstead which has none.

Long-time residents have memories of sharp tax increases after demerger, and this is apparent in how our rates relative to other towns have changed since pre-demerger. **Diagram 1** compares the percentages that MoWest rates were above the 15 other towns in 2003 to what they are in 2025.

Despite the halving of our tax rate from **2.0525** in 2003 to **1.0126** today, the percentages have widened – except for CSL, SAdB, and Westmount. For instance, back in 2003 our tax rate was only **5.1%** above NDG, now it's **58.9%**, which is the second greatest increase after Dorval. In 2003 we were **33.4%** and **34.6%** above Beaconsfield and Pointe Claire, now we're **62.5%** and **58.9%**. (The apparent contradiction of our tax rate halving yet taxes increasing dramatically is addressed in **Post 16 b**.)

What about the future? Until some large tax increases in recent years, the Town had managed in the 2010s to hold increases close to inflation. But with our debt set to double, and with the restarting of infrastructure renewal next year after only a single project from 2020 through 2025, taxes are certain to increase further above other towns.

Any ideas about what can be done?

Post 16 b examines how the tax rate works.

Post 16 c considers how high taxes have affected the real estate market.

Post 16 d looks at the opportunity cost and mortgage equivalent of the tax premium.

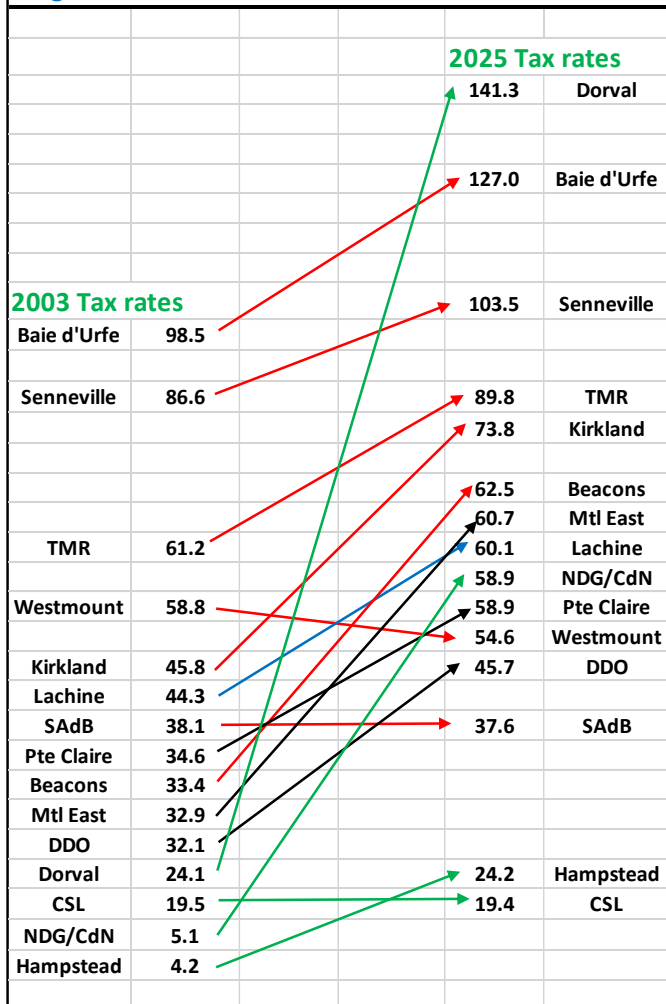
Table 1 & Diagram 1 are on the next page

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Table 1 2025	Tax rate	% MoWest	
		above	Agglo %
Dorval	0.4196	141.3	55.3
Baie d'Urfe	0.4461	127.0	63.0
Senneville	0.4977	103.5	53.7
TMR	0.5335	89.8	54.0
Kirkland	0.5825	73.8	52.0
Beaconsf'ld	0.6232	62.5	50.5
Mtl East	0.6301	60.7	45.9
Lachine	0.6323	60.1	xx
NDG/CdN	0.6373	58.9	xx
Pte Claire	0.6374	58.9	47.6
Westmount	0.6548	54.6	53.2
DDO	0.6948	45.7	50.7
SAdB	0.7359	37.6	44.2
Hampstead	0.8155	24.2	43.0
CSL	0.8483	19.4	41.1
MoWest	1.0126	-----	36.7

xx not part of Agglomeration

Diagram 1: % MoWest tax rates are above each town



Post 15: The timing of road patches February 12, 2025
Patched in October, breaking up in December

Pothole and sidewalk patching is usually announced at the April or May council meetings, though the bulk of the work is often delayed until the end of summer or early fall. Patches didn't begin in earnest in 2024 until the late September and early October "asphalt blitz" referred to at the October 28, 2024 meeting – video link below (12:22).

For residents who live on or travel only over roads with decent road surfaces, this delay is of little consequence. However, those of us using or living on older roads experience summers of dodging, and sometimes not, potholes and sidewalk fissures. (Thinking of you, Eileen O'.)

Patched in October, breaking up in December The problem is this: many patches are simply not robust, and are prone to being scraped off by snowplows. Patching late in the year provides only a brief period of bliss until the patches degrade into crumbs over the winter. And **we keep patching the same areas over and over**. Does this make sense?

Suggestions:

1. Can road and sidewalk patches be completed by the end of April so we can enjoy an extra 5 months free of road potholes and sidewalk faults?
2. On problem roads having asphalt surfaces, instead of using "throw & go" quick patches or roller compaction of larger areas of asphalt, might the Town start a program of proper repairs such as the rehabilitation evident in the video link below? Perhaps a few problem areas a year; the payoff being that the same areas would not have to be resurfaced so frequently.

Survival rates for some of the patches may be better than usual this winter since until the February 13th storm, we hadn't had quite as much snow as usual, and therefore less plowing.

The photos: Zoom into **photo 1** to see an "asphalt-berg" on the Brock N hill, January 09, 2025. **Photo 2:** Brock N. December 13, 2024 after the first snowfall. **Photo 3:** Fresh patches on Curzon beside the old BMO building, October 01, 2024. **Photo 4:** Brock N at Nelson December 18, 2024. **Photo 5:** One of the patches in photo 3 recycled into dust. **Photos 6 & 7:** Same area of Curzon beside BMO March 29, 2024 with the 2023 patches degrading. Oh, the futility!!! **Photo 8:** Fresh sidewalk patch Brock N. August 23, 2024. Unlikely to see spring 2025. **Photos 9 & 10:** The hill on Curzon, March 2024. **Photo 11:** The hill on Brock N March 16, 2024; **Photos 12 & 13:** Brock at Nelson February 08, 2025.

October 28, 2024 Council meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6MGI-NHE4A&t=1017s

Proper asphalt repair video:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=road+patches+versus+repairs&mid=BB8C81BAC1AB5086CE56BB8C81BAC1AB5086CE56&FORM=VIRE>

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1- 2025-01-09 The hill on Brock N



2- 2024-12-13 Brock N after 1st snowfall



3- 2024-10-01 Fresh repairs on Curzon



4- 2024-12-18 Brock at Nelson



5- 2024-03-29 Curzon at Westminster



6- 2025-01-18 Curzon beside old BMO

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7- 2024-03-29 Curzon by the old BMO



8- 2024-08-23 Brock N



9- 2024-03-29 The hill on Curzon



10- 2024-03-16 The hill on Curzon



11- 2024-03-16 Brock hill



12- 2025-02-08 Brock at Nelson



13- 2025-02-08 Brock at Nelson

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Post 14: The MoWest real estate market January 25, 2025

**Market recovery
But upper end unhappy**

Like many other municipalities, Montreal West experienced a surge in median selling prices of single-family dwellings from 2020 to 2022 due to pandemic demand – up **46.7%** from 2019, **Graph 1 (next page)**. The proportion of sales over \$1M increased from **16.3%** in 2019 to **57.8%** in 2021, and **56%** in 2022.

Despite the high percentage of sales over \$1M in 2022, sales volume hit its lowest level since 2000 with only 25 houses sold – **Graph 2**. (Average sales from 2000 through 2021 were 43.9 sales/year.) Almost half the median price gains since 2019 were lost in 2023 even as total sales increased marginally to 28, albeit with low sample sizes as in 2022 and 2023. **Graph 3** shows the % change in median sales prices.

Market recovery: 2024 was a good year: the **median selling price peaked to \$1,130,000** as sales increased to 32, though still below the long-term average. And the **proportion of sales over \$1M reached a high of 62.5%**.

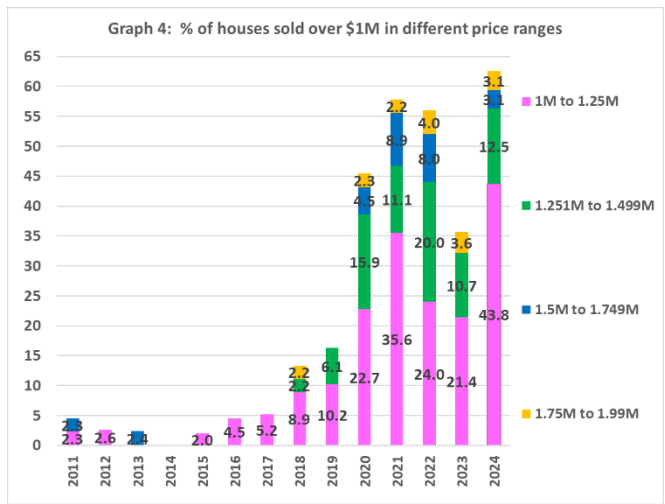
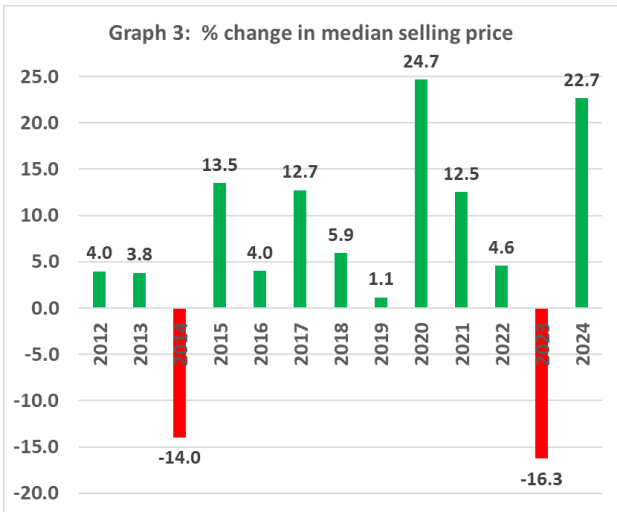
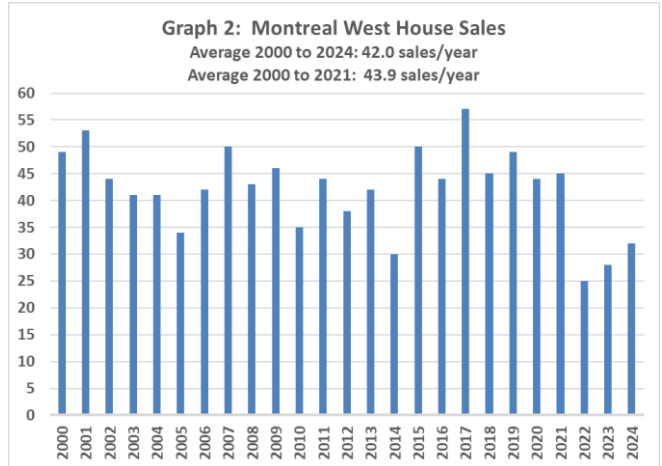
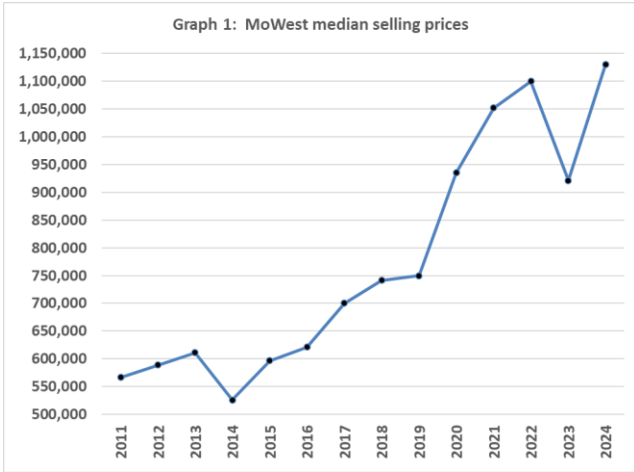
Although the market appears to have recovered, it's not an across-the-board recovery – high-end vendors remain gloomy. At one time in 2024 six houses were listed at over \$2M; none have so far sold, and half were taken off the market. In fact, since 2011 there have only been two public sales over \$2M: one at \$2,027,000 in 2018, and another at \$2,750,000 in 2023 – which was an extravagant house at the end of Brock South.

Demand in 2024 was concentrated in the lower end of \$1M to \$2M market. **Graph 4** breaks the over \$1M sales into 4 ranges. The pink bar shows that **43.8%** of all 2024 sales were between \$1M to \$1.25M, the green bar shows that another **12.5%** fell between \$1.251M and \$1.499M. **Only 6.2% sold above \$1.5M.**

Of the 12 houses on the market on January 24, 2024, three are listed over \$2M and four between \$1.5M and 1.999M – **see the table below**. None are listed below \$1M, and only five are in the “sweet spot” below \$1.5M where recent demand has been strong for over \$1M pricing.

Real estate listings for houses sold in 2024 and a list all houses sold from 2011 sorted by civic address are available at www.montreal-west.com > **Real Estate Market**.

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Selling price of all houses sold publicly since 2011													
2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1,730,000	1,225,000	1,675,000	895,000	1,155,000	1,020,000	1,120,000	2,027,000	1,372,000	1,764,000	1,812,000	#####	2,750,000	1,790,000
1,000,000	825,000	998,000	839,000	967,000	999,995	1,090,000	1,416,000	1,340,000	1,650,000	1,705,052	#####	1,915,000	1,605,000
883,000	811,000	879,000	749,000	925,000	875,000	1,000,000	1,150,000	1,298,000	1,610,000	1,700,000	#####	1,450,000	1,445,000
875,000	810,000	829,000	715,000	925,000	836,250	995,000	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,470,000	1,610,000	#####	1,405,000	1,400,000
850,000	791,000	780,000	685,000	850,000	800,000	980,000	1,075,000	1,100,000	1,410,000	1,605,000	#####	1,325,000	1,335,000
842,500	780,000	765,000	675,000	835,000	784,019	950,000	1,040,000	1,088,000	1,374,200	1,443,000	#####	1,125,000	1,319,000
775,000	765,000	760,000	660,000	805,000	764,000	930,000	995,000	1,040,000	1,350,000	1,395,000	#####	1,114,000	1,250,000
768,000	720,000	755,000	645,000	790,000	757,500	922,500	960,000	1,030,000	1,300,000	1,350,000	#####	1,073,000	1,250,000
765,000	710,000	748,000	613,000	780,000	735,000	905,000	905,000	975,000	1,295,000	1,325,000	#####	1,046,000	1,250,000
753,500	685,000	735,000	606,000	769,000	717,500	890,000	885,000	965,000	1,275,000	1,275,000	#####	1,020,078	1,245,000
711,000	674,650	729,000	563,000	732,000	697,400	870,000	880,000	962,500	1,190,000	1,236,000	#####	995,000	1,240,000
710,000	670,000	687,000	550,000	712,500	695,000	865,000	850,000	930,000	1,175,000	1,225,000	#####	980,000	1,215,000
700,000	665,000	685,000	545,000	665,000	688,000	860,000	835,000	900,000	1,175,000	1,219,000	#####	960,000	1,177,500
674,000	640,000	680,300	536,000	665,000	685,000	840,000	819,000	875,000	1,165,000	1,208,000	#####	927,500	1,160,000
644,000	623,000	669,000	532,000	665,000	680,000	800,000	806,000	847,000	1,135,000	1,207,000	994,000	915,000	1,145,000
640,000	595,000	665,000	520,000	650,000	676,000	789,000	805,000	845,000	1,105,000	1,185,000	987,500	902,500	1,130,000
633,000	595,000	655,000	500,000	650,000	675,000	777,000	800,000	844,000	1,090,000	1,170,000	980,000	900,000	1,130,000
600,000	591,000	645,000	491,906	647,500	650,000	767,228	794,200	839,000	1,060,000	1,165,000	935,000	888,000	1,100,000
591,000	590,000	640,000	490,000	644,150	645,000	765,000	760,000	826,000	1,040,000	1,135,000	800,000	880,000	1,050,000
590,000	588,000	620,000	490,000	634,000	637,500	760,000	752,000	815,000	1,004,000	1,110,000	800,000	880,000	1,008,200
590,000	585,000	613,000	475,000	631,000	632,500	756,500	750,000	802,000	987,000	1,095,000	800,000	825,000	998,000
575,000	583,000	610,000	455,000	629,000	630,000	745,000	745,000	800,000	940,000	1,080,000	775,000	820,000	980,000
558,000	578,000	605,000	450,000	621,000	612,000	725,000	741,500	790,000	930,000	1,052,000	719,000	799,000	979,900
555,000	572,500	605,000	439,000	615,000	593,000	725,000	720,000	767,500	925,000	1,025,000	700,000	780,000	895,000
555,000	550,013	600,000	423,500	609,000	590,000	723,000	712,000	750,000	917,000	1,016,000	600,000	760,000	890,000
552,000	540,000	590,000	412,500	585,000	584,000	719,500	707,000	750,000	911,000	1,000,000		724,000	875,000
550,000	535,000	580,000	400,000	576,000	580,000	714,000	702,000	748,000	882,000	990,000		705,000	822,000
532,000	530,000	575,500	389,300	560,000	560,000	702,500	694,000	731,000	874,000	985,000		575,000	724,999
530,000	505,000	575,000	350,000	548,000	545,000	700,000	680,000	730,000	840,000	980,000			715,000
522,000	480,000	549,000	316,500	535,000	539,000	687,000	644,000	725,000	831,000	974,000			700,000
515,000	475,000	549,000		525,000	537,000	678,000	630,000	720,000	830,000	974,000			615,000
514,000	475,000	529,000		517,000	520,000	650,000	629,500	708,118	813,000	965,000			575,000
512,000	470,000	517,500		505,000	510,000	635,000	607,000	675,000	800,000	950,000			
485,000	450,000	500,000		490,000	510,000	620,000	605,000	674,000	790,000	935,000			
475,000	430,000	500,000		483,000	500,000	620,000	602,000	670,000	785,000	900,000			
475,000	392,500	475,000		480,000	490,000	610,000	566,000	665,000	785,000	895,000			
450,000	375,000	465,500		469,000	490,000	610,000	560,000	662,500	785,000	882,000			
450,000	314,500	460,000		462,000	476,000	610,000	560,000	659,000	765,000	863,000			
445,000		448,000		458,000	407,000	605,000	536,000	650,000	745,500	850,000			
430,000		440,000		455,000	406,350	600,000	535,000	650,000	745,000	849,900			
425,000		400,000		455,000	405,000	600,000	535,000	640,000	735,000	831,000			
401,000		360,000		432,500	400,000	592,000	510,000	626,000	670,000	820,000			
382,500				430,000	375,000	585,000	491,000	625,000	620,000	769,000			
280,000				425,000	365,000	579,000	479,000	604,000	590,000	755,000			
				404,000		571,135	415,000	550,000		553,000			
				400,000		567,500		542,300					
				400,000		560,000		510,000					
				395,000		560,000		415,000					
				389,000		545,000		400,000					
				362,500		543,500							
						528,000							
						525,000							
						489,000							
						462,814							
						450,000							
						427,750							
						401,000							

Houses
for sale

2025-01-24

2,195,000

2,100,000

2,097,000

1,995,000

1,889,000

1,795,000

1,625,000

1,310,000

1,288,000

1,199,000

1,197,000

1,135,000

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Post 13. Salt is good, January 02, 2025

Excess salt is bad

Any dogwalker can attest to the large amounts of salt often spread on our sidewalks. Last winter it could on occasion be tasted in the air. The issue has been raised at council meetings numerous times with the reasonable response that “it’s a question of safety” – which is hard to argue with. However, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of salt spread beginning around 2019.

While it makes sense to deposit a little more salt on problem areas such as hills, sloped street corners, and driveway aprons, the attached photos – a few taken as far back as December 2020 – show large amounts of salt deposited far away from such areas, and densities of salt distribution that are clearly excessive and often non-uniform.

Equipment problems seem to be implicated: two photos show large circular dumps of salt on the sidewalk, as if a sticky chute suddenly released, while others show semi-circular patterns of salt unlike expected uniform distributions. (I’ve witnessed salt slipping out of a loose rear flap on one of the spreaders.)

Suspecting that this was not normal, I emailed Colpron, the manufacturer of at least one of our sidewalk salt spreaders on December 11, 2024, asking whether the excessive and non-uniform salt deposits in attached photos were the result of equipment problems. The reply was “... it’s not the way our spreader works.” The Colpron representative suggested the Town contact them and “we will take care of this issue.” info@colproninc.com

Two of the photos from December 16, 2020 show the Fielding/Brock intersection almost completely covered by a layer of salt – no asphalt is visible in the salted areas.

At times it seems that there’s no correlation between weather conditions and salt spreading. For instance, there was a heavy rainfall on Wednesday December 11 that melted all the snow. By early Thursday morning sidewalks had completely dried with no potential slippery zones – there was no snow melt coming off lawns because there was no snow, the sun was intermittently out, and temperatures were a few degrees above zero. Yet our sidewalk salt spreaders were laying down salt that was completely unnecessary (zoom-in on the Brock N & Westminster/Curzon photos).

Suggestions: 1. Public Works (PW) management should contact Colpron, referring to these photos, and sort out the problems. Perhaps more regular maintenance checks are in order. 2. Can we revert to 2019 levels of salt spreading that met safety requirements at the time? 3. Could PW management survey a few streets in different parts of the Town to gauge conditions before unleashing the salt spreaders?

Other than very unhappy dogs, the main consequence is the effect on the environment: all this salt ends up in our sewers and eventually the St. Lawrence river, and every April there are bands of dead grass along many sidewalks. There’s also the cost factor: in 2023 the Town spent \$137,737.45 on salt.

(Recent salt purchases can be found under “Contracts” on the **Data page** at: www.montreal-west.com)

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Photo 1 January 11, 2022



Photo 2 Nelson Jan 22, 2022

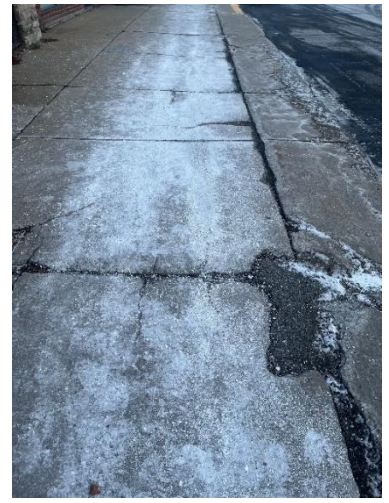


Photo 3 Westminster Jan 24, 2024



Photo 4 December 04, 2024



Photo 5



Photo 6

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Photo 7 December 16, 2020



Photo 8 December 17, 2020



Photo 9 December 16, 2020



Photo 10 December 16, 2020



Photo 11 December 12, 2024

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Photo 13 December 12, 2024



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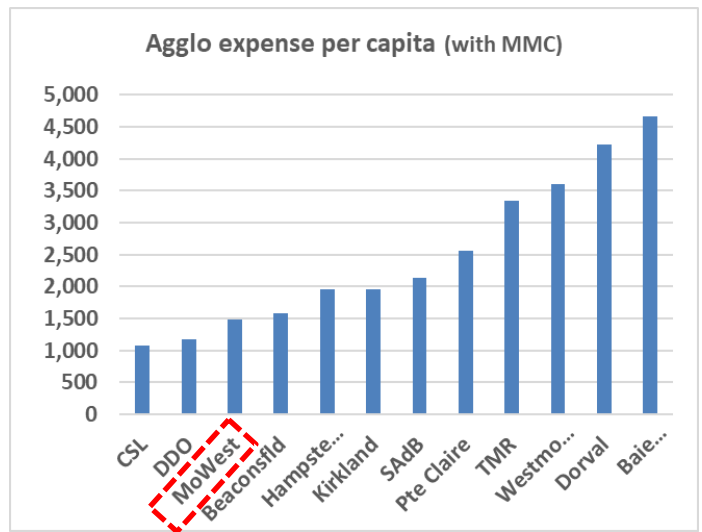
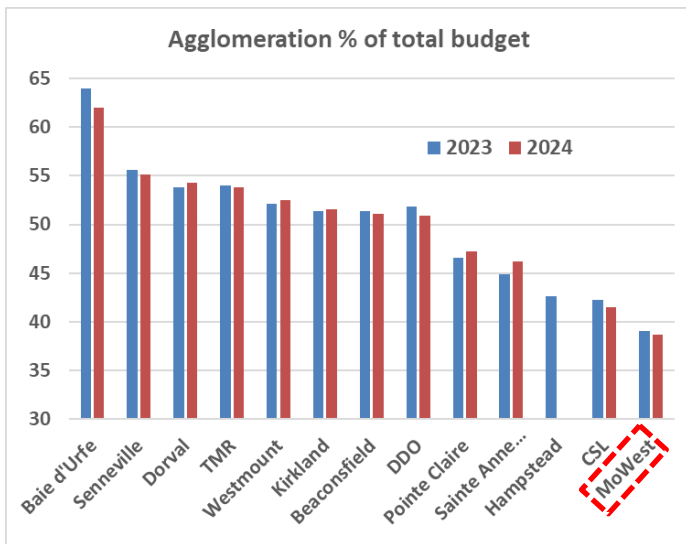
Post 12b Blame it on the Agglo?? December 19, 2024

Franco raised an interesting point about Agglomeration taxes; there's no doubt that they unfairly and disproportionately penalize the demerged suburbs. However, there's been a common misconception, even an urban myth, as to the extent they impact MoWest relative to other municipalities.

Data for other towns for 2025 won't be available until mid-January, but the 2024 values in the attached photos show that the MoWest contribution of **38.7%** of our budget to the Agglomeration was the **lowest percent contribution of the demerged suburbs**. In terms of a fairer assessment of **Agglo expense per capita**, we were the **third lowest**.

Most other towns are clearly doing much worse.

Data can be viewed on the website www.mntreal-west.com > Data page > Property taxes > Tax comparison with other towns.



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Post 12a The 2025 Budget December 17, 2024**A few highlights**

1. **Tax growth is still high.** The 2025 tax rate is **1.0126**. To find your municipal tax, drop the last two digits of your valuation on last year's tax bill, and multiply by the tax rate.

The tax on the average house – valued at \$1,034,567 – increased **5.64%** or **\$559** to **\$10,476**. **Graph 1: the tax on the average house** shows the steep growth in recent years. The overall increase since 2021 is \$2,285 or **27.9%**, averaging **7.0%** per year.

2. **Comparison with other towns.** The average-valued MoWest house would pay only **\$6,593** at NDG's 2025 tax rate of 0.6373, making our taxes **58.9%** higher. The Ville Marie tax rate of 0.6228 results in taxes of \$6,443, and the Le Plateau tax rate of 0.6500 would give \$6,725.

Tax rates for demerged towns are not yet available (CSL has their meeting on December 18th), I'll update this post in future.

3. **Restarting road renewal delayed to 2026 – a disappointment.** The **2024 budget** projected infrastructure spending of \$2.8M in 2025 – mostly to re-do Courtney Drive, and \$2.34M in 2026. The **2025 budget** now pushes the Courtney renewal to 2026 budgeting \$2,892,500 for infrastructure spending and then \$2,500,000 in 2027 for another street. The only major project since 2020 was Fenwick in 2021.
4. **The 23.9% jump in debt charges** – the principal and interest payments on loans, from \$1,981,055 budgeted in 2024 to \$2,453,540 budgeted for 2025 is not unexpected due to financing of the rec center.

Graph 2 shows budgeted debt charges and actual debt charges (Actual 2024 values won't be available until May, 2025).

The final rec center debt may be around \$14.5M (last year's rec center cost of \$39M less \$16M in grants less about \$6M from the accumulated surplus less expected donations of \$2.5M). Our debt at the end of 2023 was \$15.1M with debt charges of \$1.5M at an average borrowing rate of 2.87%, so almost doubling debt with the additional \$14.5M should almost double the debt charges. The reason these charges don't appear in 2025 is due to the timing of final payments and holdbacks which may extend into the last quarter of 2025.

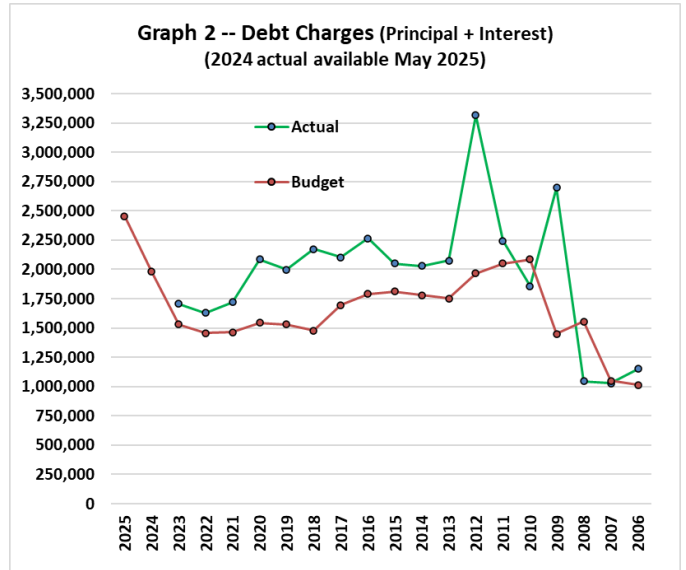
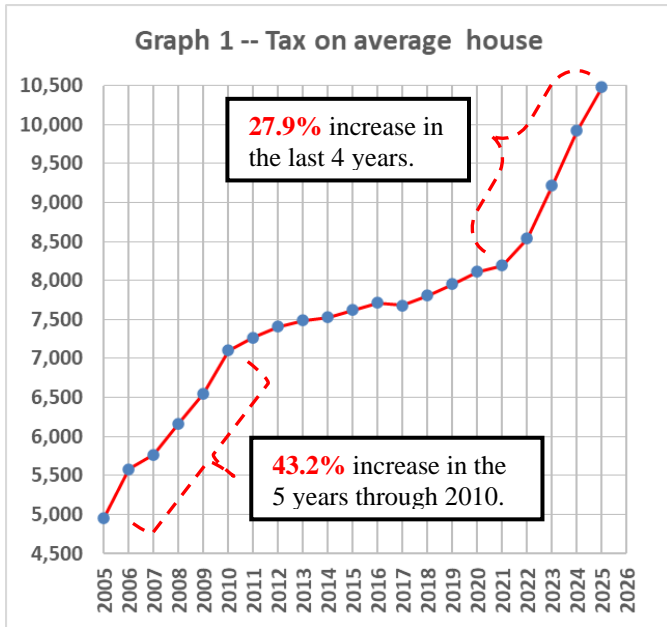
What will be tricky in the future is to support \$1.5M to \$2M of additional debt each year if we wish to continue with infrastructure renewal.

5. **Tax increase due to the rec center.** The 2024 budget (last page) attributed **\$194** of the 7.58% tax increase to the rec center. The 2025 budget (last page) attributes **\$373** for a total **\$467**. The main concern is to what extent this year's debt charges reflect a realistic final debt.

2025 budget: <https://montreal-west.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Budget-2025-FINAL.pdf>

2024 budget: <https://montreal-west.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Budget-2024-FINAL-1.pdf>

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CAPITAL SPENDING	2024	2025	2026	2027
Infrastructure (2024 Budget)	460,000	2,800,000	2,340,000	
Infrastructure (2025 Budget)		781,150	2,892,500	2,500,000
Buildings (2024 Budget)	16,867,000	15,575,000	160,000	
Buildings (2025 Budget)		12,640,600	572,000	160,000
Vehicles (2024 Budget)	205,000	275,000	75,000	
Vehicles (2025 Budget)		503,239	75,000	75,000

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Post 11c: Westminster crossing non-compliant (January 31, 2025)
Bold measures in upcoming pilot project

At the January 27, 2025 council meeting two members of the **Student Safety in MoWest** group pressed the Town about recommendations in the November 2023 traffic study report which the Town had refused to release at the December 16, 2024 council meeting – **Post 11b**.

Group member 1 enquired (32:17 in the video link below) about the proposed **phased-approach** for traffic mitigation on Westminster, beyond just **banning the left turn south on Westminster off of Sherbrooke**. A councillor replied that the pilot project will include 3 other recommendations from the traffic study: **prohibiting southbound turns from Broughton onto Westminster, installing small traffic islands** at the crosswalks, and **reducing some southbound lanes on Westminster**.

The resident was pleased that the Town was “going to prioritize safety over convenience” and asked whether the Town might at least present the results of the traffic study to interested residents. The councillor (35:10) stated that “we’re currently seeing how we can do a summary because it’s a very heavy, heavy report.”

The councillor reiterated the Town position from the December meeting: “Sometimes when you release a massive report people [extract] little tiny pieces, make their own conclusions, then circulate the information. It’s not always the best way to communicate that information...”

A second group member (35:50) who had contacted **Transport Canada** about the train crossing found that a **letter of non-compliance** had been issued to both the Town and the railway, CPKC, in November 2023. MoWest had responded with a **corrective measures plan** in December 2023. The resident has submitted an access to information request to examine the corrective measures plan and asked if the Town would be willing to share it.

The mayor (37:09) did not respond to the request to share the corrective measures plan. Instead, he stated that the non-compliance letter was one of the things that caused the Town to redo the [2014/15] traffic study to make sure that the next steps were in line with best practices.

The resident (37:46) then wondered “if you submitted a corrective measures plan to Transport Canada, **does that not oblige the [Town] to do those things?**”

The resident continued: “So stopping southbound turns off Sherbrooke, that’s part of the corrective measures plan, all the other things you mentioned [to the other group member] are part of the corrective measures plan, so we’re obligated to do those things, or we’re not?”

The mayor replied: “That’s a good question. I don’t know that we had to commit to certain things. I think we had to commit to studying it. It just happened, that accident on Westminster, and kind of went hand-in-hand.”

A councillor clarified (38:31) that the corrective measures were indeed the recommendations coming from the November 2023 traffic study report and are the measures that are going to be put in place.

The resident (39:01) then asked **what the non-compliance was**. The mayor replied: “I have to be honest, I don’t remember that part. I think they were talking about sometimes too much signage. Sometimes it wasn’t clear. Our biggest goal was ... let’s do the traffic study again. Let’s get up to date.”

If the Town is concerned that the “very heavy” November 2023 report might cause some MoWest residents to “propagate the information incorrectly” – as described at the December meeting, a compromise would be to release the much-abridged corrective measures plan which surely is clearer and wouldn’t confuse residents.

Flashing stop signs on Westminster would not have been installed without lobbying by the **Student Safety in MoWest** group. The groups’ efforts have further led to an accelerated phase-in of the corrective measures which seemed to have been languishing in council, allowing us to determine whether any of these measures are effective.

January 27, 2025 council meeting video: <https://www.youtube.com/live/qTgGxDq6POI>

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Post 11b Town's position disappointing **Refuses release of traffic study**

At the December 16, 2024 council meeting – video (1:04:55), a representative of the **High School Student Safety in Montreal West** committee asked that a 2014/15 traffic study concerning Westminster, including the train crossing, be made public.

The mayor refused this request citing “we try and limit [the information] because what happens is ... there’s a lot of people ... and I’m speaking with all respect ... who think they’re experts and don’t know anything about what they’re speaking about, and what they end up doing is propagating the information incorrectly. ... Not everyone’s a traffic engineer ... I cannot control the message, the incorrect message that propagates. ... I’d rather you come and ask a question.” (See complete statement in link below.)

Despite the mayor’s comment that he’s “speaking with all respect”, it’s difficult to fathom what might be so sensitive or difficult to comprehend in the report that residents should be denied access. The Town has a very intelligent and educated demographic, most of whom are quite capable of understanding any nuances in the report. Perhaps certain recommendations weren’t followed because we can’t afford them. That’s okay, but just let us know what they were.

According to my reading of the Access to Information act – link below, Division II, sections 18 through 40 seem to be the only restrictions that might apply. The risk of residents “propagating the information incorrectly” is not cited as a reason for denying access.

It’s certainly expedient to govern with an electorate that’s kept in the dark, but is it democratic and just? It also feels a bit paternalistic. Though we may not be traffic engineers, a good many of us can think.

Perhaps the Town can rethink its position and release the traffic study. And for good measure, the infrastructure priority list which it promised to release at the February 2023 council meeting only to reverse the decision at the June meeting because residents might be “upset and angry” if their street was bumped – links in Post 11a.

Access to information link: <https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/A-2.1>

Complete transcript of the mayor’s comment: https://www.montreal-west.com/files/ugd/f79513_cea8f49e20954eacad9a26b6dfb2e4fb.pdf

December council meeting link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0wOkPb_k7w

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Post 11a Access to information December 11, 2024
Interesting reports we never see

Over the years the Town has commissioned a number of traffic studies and other reports – most internally prepared, and a few externally. These reports are never made public.

External reports include: a 2013/14 traffic engineer’s report on the Westminster-Sherbrooke intersection which found traffic lights to be unfeasible, a 2022 Street Lighting Master Plan, and a beautification plan for Westminster proposed by a landscape architect – references below. Hardly controversial stuff or state secrets. Our municipal taxes are paying for these potentially informative reports that we’re not allowed to see, but why not?

Internally there are the annual Reports on Drinking Water (described in Post 10), numerous studies relating to traffic calming measures on various streets, and recent recommendations by the Community Safety Committee (CSC) concerning Westminster traffic issues.

Our council is elected to make decisions on our behalf, but this should not mean that we forfeit knowledge of what’s going on and how Town business is being conducted. **The main idea behind demerger was that we retain control over our municipal affairs.** Prohibiting access to information makes us no better than a larger merged city.

The lack of public engagement in municipal affairs and generally poor attendance at council meetings is sometimes lamented; greater document transparency might help. How can residents knowledgeably discuss certain Town issues without being privy to relevant background information? Shouldn’t reports on general conditions in the Town be available to residents? (Other than HR issues, it’s difficult to imagine anything that should be off-limits to citizen perusal.)

On November 11, 2024, I filed an access to information request to see the first two external reports described above, the CSC Westminster recommendations, and 3 traffic calming studies. And on December 02 requested the latest Report on Drinking Water.

Street Light Master Plan (Plan directeur d’éclairage), September 20, 2022 council meeting (51:20):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkqHk-QQn9Q> Referenced at November 25, 2024 meeting (1:22:52)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qpfjyd1DJeU>

Westminster Beautification Plan referenced in the May 29, 2017 council meeting minutes. 9-th question
Westminster/ Sherbrooke intersection traffic engineer’s report. August 30, 2021 council meeting. (1:09:44)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuaRDkMmRPE>

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Post 10 Update on lead pipes December 05, 2024

1. At the November 25, 2024 council meeting (video 1:25:42 – link below) **Gabriel A.** asked **why Strathearn hasn't been prioritized** for infrastructure renewal given that lead levels have significantly exceeded recommended maximum thresholds. A councillor replied (1:26:19) that the first priority when we're looking at when streets will be redone is based on the state of the underground pipes and not on the quality of the water. However, she went on to say that "things like lead in the water or cross connections or other issues under the street can also be factored in... If two streets we're looking at, ...and all things being equal, we could consider lead as being one of the factors to put that street higher on the priority list... **It's (Strathearn) not realistic to be done in 2025.**" But "**as soon as we have the funds** to do it, I think we can be hopeful that **possibly** the lead issue will be one of the factors".
2. **Availability of funding.** During the January 22, 2024 council meeting (41:38) a councillor noted that the Town had just secured a **\$2.4M** TECQ grant for 2024/25/26. In fact, a 2024 announcement of federal/provincial gasoline tax (TECQ) grants provided Quebec with more than \$3.2B over 5 years.

According to the Town's [2024 budget](#), Courtney Drive is slated for renewal in 2025 "contingent on government grants" – which we now have. Unless Courtney has lead levels as bad as Strathearn and pipes in incredibly poor shape, shouldn't making Strathearn lead-free be the criterion that trumps everything else?

Suggestion: Give high lead levels a very large weighting among the criteria for infrastructure renewal. (How much discretion/judgement does the Town exercise in setting street priorities?)

3. At the October 1, 2024 council meeting (video 54:12) the mayor deposited the annual **Report on Drinking Water** which had been approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The contents of this and earlier annual reports might be useful to gauge where, and to what extent, lead is a problem. Privacy concerns sometimes prevent release of documents; in this case only civic address block numbers need be given: 00s, 100s, 200s.... Surely it's time that residents get to see the big picture. (I filed an Access to Information request on December 2 to obtain this document.)
4. The company Eurofins Environex does metal scanning, including lead, for \$130 plus tax. Link below. 514-332-6001 (MoWest tests are done through the City of Montreal.)
5. Sections of other old roads such as Percival, Wolseley N, Brock & Ballantyne south of Broughton, and Brock N may suffer from similar severe lead problems.

January 22, 2024 council meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPP_XtRcCMQ

October 1, 2024 meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFpcBAxjSKc&t=1342s>

November 25, 2024 council: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qpfjyd1DJeU>

2024 Budget: <https://montreal-west.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Budget-2024-FINAL-1.pdf>

Eurofins Environex water testing: <https://www.labenvironex.com/en/environment/drinking-water-analysis/>

Federal/provincial gas tax grants (TECQ grants 2024 to 2028):

<https://www.quebec.ca/habitation-territoire/infrastructures-municipales/programmes/eau-potable-eaux-uses/programme-transfert-infrastructures-eau-collectives-quebec-tecq-2024-2028>

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Post 9 Garage door blues November 29, 2024
Permit process survey, Less adversarial permit process
Legally binding PAC decisions
Does anybody even notice garage doors?

This case came up at the March 25, 2024 council meeting (video 35:47 – YouTube link below). My summary has not done it justice; it's well worth viewing the exchange. Information in the first and last sentence of the next paragraph was provided by the resident.

Last winter a resident was trying to convert living space back to its original function as a garage so his elderly mother wouldn't need to venture outside in the snow and ice to reach her car. His contractor assured him that no permit was needed as he'd installed a number of colonial-style (with squares) garage doors in the neighbourhood without a permit. Being conscientious, the resident informed the city, but was told a permit was needed. He was later informed that "For aesthetic reasons, PAC wants the garage door to have flat panels instead of colonial squares." The contractor had already purchased a colonial-style door and there would be a delay in acquiring a panel-type door.

In the hope of moving forward quickly, the resident made "multiple written requests for an exemption and to have a brief opportunity to address the file with PAC", to no avail. [Note: **64.3%** of 28 similar nearby Bedbrook/Fairfield houses have colonial-style doors, only **14.3%** have panel-style, and many of the houses are of the same style as the resident's mother.] After a great many back-and-forths, the resident ended up feeling that "The permit process has become exhausting and frustrating. Citizens feel they have a right to invest in their homes without the stress and anxiety currently being fostered."

The resident had two useful questions:

1. **"Is the city open to conducting a survey** that will specifically address our citizens' degree of satisfaction with the permits process, the PAC's performance, and the overall permit application experience?" (The mayor indicated that council would consider this possibility, but there has been no movement to date.)
2. **"Can we have a permit process that fosters collaboration** and doesn't give us the impression of weaponization of the process against citizens?"

Further during the exchange, a councillor revealed that **once PAC issues a permit with recommendations it becomes legally binding**. "Our responsibility was to recommend a door that was aesthetically pleasing to the house... Everything else is a legal matter. So, the problem right now is a legal matter, not with PAC, there's no point in going back to PAC."

The resident concluded observing that "now **we're taking an opinion [by PAC] and making it into an obligation**." **"What you're objecting to is a subjective detail."** (The resident in **Post 6** expressed similar concerns.)

Walking around Montreal West, it's difficult to find an objectionable garage door. They're pretty much standard. How many people walk by a house contemplating whether the garage door fits the aesthetic of the house?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmAQ5boX3yE>

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Post 8b Quebec recycling changes January 09, 2025

An ambitious initiative

Two significant changes: An increase in **1.** the variety of containers targeted by the deposit-refund system, and **2.** the number of things that can be recycled.

1. According to the provincial Environment department website – link below, the following will require deposits:

“March 1, 2025: **the addition of all other containers** (glass, other breakable materials, plastic, ferrous metals, multilayered, bio-sourced) for beverages (**juice, water, milk, wine, spirits, etc.**) that were not returnable by November 1, 2023”. The deposit will be “\$0.10 for most containers and **\$0.25** for 500 milliliter or more glass containers”. **!!Milk cartons, wine bottles, water bottles, energy drinks, everything!!**

Apparently even tetra-packs popular in kids lunch boxes will be included. One of the managers at the November 22, 2024 tour of the Lachine recycling facility noted that expanded deposits will definitely impact grocery bills. On the surface, it's certainly bound to reduce garbage loads, but the refund centers would have to be very conveniently located such that the gas used getting there doesn't become a problem in itself. And won't it be a somewhat regressive “tax” on poorer families and fixed-income seniors who can't make it to a refund center?

There were initially supposed to be a minimum of 1,500 return locations by March 1, 2025, but the recycling plant tour indicated only about 400 have been established, so expect teething problems.

2. Glass containers are the big item that will now be accepted in the blue bin. (I must confess that all these years I've been putting glass containers in the blue box, particularly wine bottles. Too often hearing wine bottles in France shattering in recycling domes, I guess.)

Also included will be **plastic film**, and things such as **chip bags and yogurt cups**. Exceptions to the new rule: aerosol cans, polystyrene packaging – or Styrofoam which is expanded polystyrene, biodegradable plastics and compostable bags.

A couple of things in the CBC report on these changes linked below are inconsistent with the recycling center tour: pizza boxes deemed recyclable on the tour even with a bit of stuck-on food are limited to have only grease stains. And peanut butter containers, which on the tour were acceptable even half full, apparently need to be cleaned and rinsed, though not “shiny clean”. But what are the environmental implications of using a lot of hot water and detergent to clean a peanut butter jar?

The philosophy, according to Marie-Claude Rivet in the CBC report, is that although “not all items that can now go into the recycling bin will be recycled, ‘it's important to put them in the bin anyway, because it's the best way to increase the volumes and to help to develop the markets for these materials”.

The Environment department is conducting an ongoing public consultation from December 19, 2024 to February 1, 2025 accessed via a link at the top of its webpage.

Quebec Environment department :

<https://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/matieres/consigne-collecte/modernisation-consigne-en.htm#changes>

CBC January 01, 2025 report and Gazette January 04, 2025 article: www.montreal-west.com **Hot topics > Environment > Recycling changes March 1, 2025**

A link in the CBC report to a website describing what can currently be recycled:

<https://cavaouwebapp.recyc-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/information/Wt8XpO2u4ElroBbkKsZ9>

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Post 8a Blue bin recycling November 26, 2024
What can you put in?

On November 22, 2024 I participated in a tour of the non-profit **SocieteVai** recycling plant in Lachine, organized by our Environmental Action Committee, and was part of plant manager's Marco S's group.

The plant employs 113 intellectually challenged workers on Marco's team who work 1 to 5 days a week – their choice. "There's a low turnover rate, but when people leave, we're happy for them because it means they've found a better job." **Only 20% of plant input by weight ends up in landfills**; 85% of the sorting is done by machinery; 1,800 tons is processed per week. Paper and cardboard have a local market, plastic is sent to Holland and one other European country. Unfortunately, Montreal is the champion of plastic film that can't be recycled. An October visitor from BC indicated that Montreal recycling is in the middle-ages.

Starting in 2025 there will apparently be big changes to our provincial recycling with a lot more items requiring deposits, including tetra packs for drinks.

If you're like me, you've probably been frustrated about what can be put in the blue bin. How clean should containers be; what about greasy containers and pizza boxes? Should the plastic collars around Kleenex boxes be ripped off? Can plastic bags for dirt and mulch, or wrappers on Costco bundles of toilet paper, paper towels, and Kleenex be recycled? Christmas lights? What about a metal picture frame, or cast-iron frying pan? Screws, nails, nuts & bolts?

I was surprised by some of the answers, and have created a list that can be reached by the link below – last topic in the **Environment** section. If you have any questions about what's recyclable, email me at paul.kenton48@gmail.com . I'll get a decision from Marco and update the list.

<https://www.montreal-west.com/hot-topics-2>

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Post 7c: Norway maple “cancelled” December 04, 2024
Car & internet cable safe

The problem Norway maple referenced in **Post 7b** was removed today, without first being marked with the “X” of death! Bravo Town!



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Post 7b: Norway Maple attacks car, likely to re-offend November 20, 2024

At the August, 2024 council meeting (video 1:15:55– link below) a resident described how a fallen branch from a Norway maple caused **\$12,000 of damage** to her car, depreciating it by \$5,000 (according to Spinelli) and increased her insurance by \$500. A councillor replied that the tree was inspected in January and was in good health and stable and hence no reason to remove at that time. Public works will inspect it again. (As of mid-November, no “X” has been painted on the diseased trunk signifying removal, nor have the dead branches been trimmed.)

One of the photos below show a frost crack that has become diseased and weakened the trunk. The other two photos show a couple of dead branches that may not make it through the upcoming winter and have the car in their sights.

Suggestion: Just to be on the record, the homeowner might consider sending a registered letter holding the Town responsible for any damage this winter. The house on the right will probably not be damaged if the trunk fails as it’s not leaning toward the house, but there’s a thick fiber optic phone cable that might knock out service west of Westminster.

August council meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7AoOo8rKOc&t=4647s>



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Post 7a: Norway Maples: Invasive & diseased November 20, 2024

At the June 25, 2024 council meeting a resident asked (17:19): “Is council considering allowing homeowners who are struggling with invasive Norway maples on their properties to be able to remove the trees?” Homes on Easton backing onto the Falaise/cliff have seen an exponential growth of Norway maples that is destroying the ecosystem. Toronto has an organization responsible for the preservation of the ecosystem of their ravines and “the Norway maple is identified as an invasive species that homeowners are expected to remove.”

In Montreal West, a fungal plant disease – **Eutypella parasitica** – has caused some Norway maples to develop **cankers** in their trunks which will eventually cause the tree trunk to break at that point. More troubling is the appearance of **spiral frost cracks** along trunks – caused by temperature changes in the winter – which can lead to disease penetration. In addition, Norway maples “struggle to compartmentalize or seal off wounds on their trunks or branches. This means that when [they] suffer from wind damage or limb breakage, rot continues down into them instead of being sealed off by healthy wood” – Vistatree link below.

In one of the links below, is an internal Toronto city government letter identifying Norway maples as **invasive** (point 6, page 1), a **safety hazard** (point 1, page 7), **creating too much shade** (point 6, pg 7), and **prone to disease** (point 7, pg 7). The Vistatree link gives a good overview about problems with Norways.

Suggestions:

1. Declare Norway maples invasive and allow homeowners to remove them.
2. Since many of our Norway maples are of approximately the same age, to avoid a catastrophe with the tree canopy, let’s start a controlled cull of those on Town property in front of residents’ homes.
3. Town bylaws currently only allow trees to be removed if they’re sick or dangerous. Along with invasive, we might also recognize a homeowners right to sunlight and add “create too much shade” to the conditions for removal.

June 25, 2024 council meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZmCXFu_m44

Toronto city government letter: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/te/comm/communicationfile-99444.pdf>

Vistatree link: <https://vistatree.ca/norway-maple-problems-toronto/>

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Photo 1



Photo 2

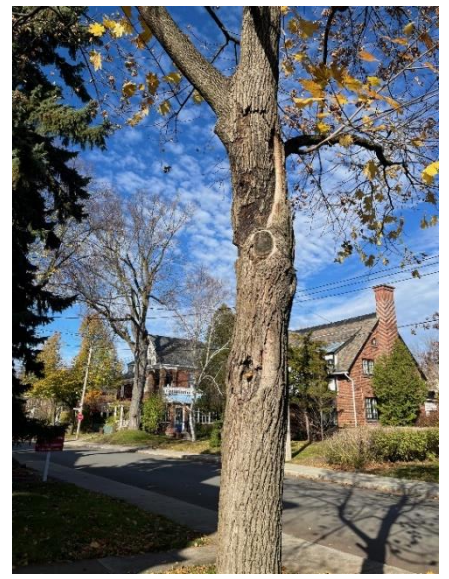


Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

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Post 6: Clarification & simplification of permit requirements November 16, 2024
Expense of permits for seniors
Allow homeowners some choice
Subjective decisions by PAC

This text is mostly in the words of a resident who asked at the June 25, 2024 council meeting (video – 34:48, link below) for clarification of what things actually require permits, and if there could be some simplification of permit requirements. For changing a door or window or roof, are there some **standard colours that are acceptable so homeowners wouldn't have to pay for a permit?** There are people opting not to do work because they cannot absorb the additional expense and the delay.

Is there a way to **allow homeowners the liberty of having some choice** in what they want to do. People are being reasonable. Obviously if someone wants to put in a purple door, or something else, that should require a permit. It becomes **onerous for those of us who are seniors on a fixed income**. Could the Town consider simplifying the permit process and **not require permits for so many little things?**

The resident continued (38:04): If you're switching a white door for a brown door, **it becomes very subjective for a committee (PAC) to say you can't do it because it's not in keeping with the neighbourhood.**

A councillor replied (38:25) that it's not completely subjective. The SPAIP – Site Planning and Architectural Integration Program -- provides limits on how many colours you can use on a house. We recently had a case of someone picking a colour for a side door that didn't coordinate with anything else. Quebec tells us we have to preserve the architecture of the Town.

This resident made some very good points. As noted in Post 4, residents in the past had much greater freedom without it compromising architectural aesthetics. Is the colour of a side door really a threat to the architectural integrity of the Town? (PAC is usually concerned with the appearance of the front of houses.)

Is it not possible to relax bylaw enforcement for a few years and gauge whether there have been any serious consequences?

xxxx

June 25, 2024 Council meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZmCXFu_m44

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Post 5a The infrastructure priority list. November 13, 2024
Make it public!!

Not all streets that have terrible road surfaces have underground problems. Much infrastructure work has been done north of the Hump – even though those streets were built in the 50s and 60s and their surfaces are in good shape – because the underground pipes are rotten. Same for Courtney Drive and Brynmor south of Avon Road. Conversely, sections of Brock N with terrible surfaces have not been redone because their underground pipes are apparently in good shape.

The Town revises the priority list of streets in need of major repair annually as new information is received, such as underground videos, recent water main breaks, and sinkholes. On one occasion, the Mayor suggested that the issue of lead in pipes would also be a contributing factor.

Residents have long asked for the priority list to be made public. At the February 2023 council meeting (April 2023 Informer) one councillor finally agreed, only to reverse her position at the June 2023 meeting (video 44:36) citing that residents would be “upset and angry” if their street was bumped. But surely people would understand if council presented reasons for the change when the revised list was published. Since the list has never been published, how does council know that residents would be upset and angry?

Being kept in the dark, not knowing when your street will be repaired, is an irritant for homeowners on the streets affected. And also for those of us having to drive over them. It becomes a safety issue in areas where there are high levels of lead contamination such as on Strathearn N described in **Post 5b**.

Shouldn't residents at last have access to the list, it's a simple matter of transparency? Why the secrecy?

Post 5b Priority to lead-contaminated streets November 13, 2024

A Strathearn N. homeowner (presumably on the un-renewed section between Curzon & Nelson) reported on the MW Residents FB group (Nov 11, 2024) that her lead concentrations were 3x the acceptable limit -- despite their water intake service line being replaced by copper last year**. Another Strathearn resident in the 100s block reported levels 5x acceptable, though a third some 150 ft closer to Curzon has no problems – perhaps because of proximity to the redone portion of Strathearn below Curzon (assuming a northward flow of water from Sherbrooke).

Instead of redoing Courtney Drive in 2025 – as per the 2024 Town budget – the Town should re-do Strathearn using lead contamination to bump it up the list.

** Perhaps the diffusion phenomenon – in which particles in areas of high concentration tend to diffuse/ migrate to areas of lower concentration – explains why the copper pipe home is contaminated. When there is no water flow into a nearby house having a lead service pipe, the high concentrations of lead particles in that pipe would diffuse back into the main water line in the street. However, during periods of heavy flow, turbulence in the main line would probably mix the contamination uniformly so that all houses should experience higher levels, and not just those in proximity to the lead pipe, which is contrary to the Strathearn evidence where one house is unaffected.

It would be interesting to study the concentrations of lead throughout the day where there were different flow rates down the main pipe. Sounds like a good high school science fair project! (I'll kick in \$150 for testing if any students are seriously interested, but more money would be needed.)

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Post 3 Searching for past valuation contestation information November 04, 2024
2024 will be the base year for the next 2026 valuation roll. We can help each other.

Every three years houses are valued using house sales in a base year, and a new valuation roll is created. 2024** will be the base year for the valuation roll to be introduced at the end of 2025, which will be used to calculate taxes for 2026/27/28.

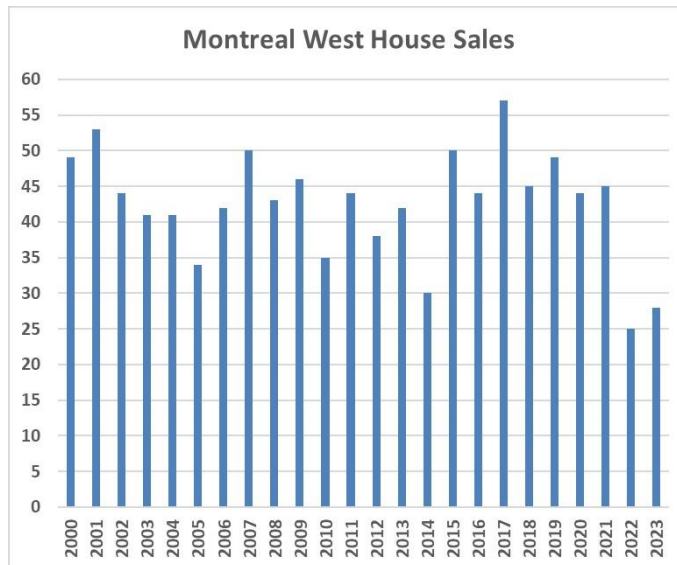
Residents who feel their valuations are too high often wonder if it's worth the money to contest. In the December 2023 Informer, councillor Feeney noted that of the 45 contestations of the 2023 roll, 25 (56%) won decreases, 19 (42%) remained unchanged, and one unfortunate had an increase.

In anticipation of contestations of the 2026 roll, it could be useful to gather information on contestations of the 2023 roll. Specifically, how MoWest residents built their cases and the documentation that the valuation department provided when making a case against contestants.

With enough information about past contestations, more cases can probably be won in the future. Please email me at: paulkenton48@gmail.com if you're willing to share information.

View councillor Feeney's communique on the **Council Reports** page, under **Miscellaneous > Valuation challenges** at www.montreal-west.com

**Since the MoWest market has been stagnant – only 17 sales in the first three quarters compared with median annual sales of 44 and an annual average of 42.5 from 2000 to 2023 – the valuation department may have to reach back into 2023.



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Post 2 A proposal for improved crosswalk signage & lighting at the Sherbrooke crosswalk
 November 01, 2024

The problems: The two crosswalks on either side of the tracks both suffer from inadequate signage, particularly on the Sherbrooke side. Drivers heading north are shaken around crossing the tracks and then confronted during heavy traffic periods by cars playing “chicken” darting left off Sherbrooke and left off Westminster onto Sherbrooke. Notice in the distance photo from just before Sherbrooke that the crosswalk sign is barely noticeable.

The lighting over both crosswalks is very dim, which is especially a problem during months when it gets dark early. Since more durable lead- and oil-based road markings are no longer permitted, the crosswalk zebra stripes fade rapidly.

The solutions:

1. Improved signage using a yellow banner-type crosswalk sign as shown in the third photo.
2. Much, much brighter lights – that can be seen from space!
3. The mayor mentioned at one time that the Town was investigating more permanent markings that are bonded to the road surface. Let’s get them ASAP. If not, repaint the crosswalks twice: mid-April and early November.

Anyone have other ideas?



**Not much warning of a crosswalk
 The white stripes in the foreground distract drivers**



The single crosswalk sign heading north



Effective overhead crosswalk banner



Bold crosswalk stripes at south side of Cavendish Mall

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Post 1: Repairs versus renovations – should any repairs require a permit? November 01, 2024

The following cases highlight the need for a much broader understanding of the difference between repairs/maintenance and renovations, and whether any repairs/maintenance should even require a permit.

1. A post on the MW Residents FB page (sept 12, 2023) described how a resident was restoring his basement after the catastrophic flood of July 14, 2023. A “mountain of old drainpipes and contractor debris bags on [his] driveway” attracted the attention of a Town employee who told him he needed a permit.
2. A resident on the MW Residents FB page (Apr 13, 2021) questioned why he’ll need a permit to restore his front steps and awing to exactly the same look when he felt it should be considered a repair so he could avoid the permit process and costs.
3. A reply posted to case 2 described how a resident who had a hole in his roof leaking water during the spring rainy season couldn’t wait to get a permit. He had it fixed, and got a fine.
4. At the September 18, 2017 council meeting a resident reported that he’d been fined for making chimney repairs without a permit.
5. In 2019 my neighbour was fined \$450 for replacing her roof shingles with exactly the same colour. She brought it to a council meeting where it was acknowledged that the “pendulum had swung too far in one direction” and that the bylaw would be changed. Yet she couldn’t recoup her \$450.

Bylaws were eventually modified for cases 3, 4, and 5. But in case 1 the homeowner was surely repairing a flooded basement and chose to do maintenance on the rusty, old pipes. Case 2 speaks for itself.

Comments are welcomed on other repair situations and bylaws that might deserve examination and change, and whether there are any repairs/ maintenance that should require a permit?

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