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## Communauto Flex car sharing. (February, 2023, Informer)



### **MOWEST WELCOMES COMMUNAUTO FLEX CAR SHARING**

I'm pleased to announce that the car sharing service, **Communauto**, is extending its "Flex" service into MoWest making it much more attractive for residents to start car sharing!

#### **What does Communauto offer?**

Communauto offers two types of service: reserved vehicles (that must be picked up and dropped off at a fixed location) and Flex vehicles (which require no reservation and can be picked up anywhere and dropped off anywhere within the company's service area). Up to now, Communauto has only had two spots for reserved vehicles in the Westminster public parking lot. And these spots served our 100 local members. Now that we are part of their "Flex zone" residents will have much more access to vehicles and more leeway in how they use them.



#### **Why use Communauto?**

Most MoWesters who currently use the service do so in lieu of owning a car, or purchasing an additional family car. It's certainly a lot more economical and sustainable for those who don't have a daily commute, but still want the convenience of a car occasionally.

Communauto has several levels of membership. For the very occasional user their "Liberte" plans do not require a membership fee. For regular users, their "Economique" plans require a membership fee and security deposit but offer quite moderate rates per hour (or \$/km) – certainly cheaper than owning a car.

Under the Flex system, MoWest users are now able to pick up a car steps

from their location, use it to run errands, etc., and leave it in Town – ready for the next person to use it.

The Flex cars must adhere to all local parking regulations but will be given dispensation from our overnight and four hour parking limitations.

Think you might want to give it a try? They have over 1000 designated Flex vehicles to take you where you want to go. Check out their website: <https://montreal.communauto.com/how-it-works/?lang=en>

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## Councillors on social media (February, 2024, Informer)

### CONTACT US



One of the nice things about living in a small town is the access residents have to the high-level managers providing services and local elected officials. Personally, I probably do half my job chatting with people about their concerns while walking the dog around town or during recreation events and frequently in my aquafit or exercise classes. Like all my fellow council members, I'm very accessible.

But one place you're not likely to engage managers and council members is via social media. Unfortunately, this realm, while handy to relate simple factual info, is generally not the place for conversations about complex issues. The discourse often rewards sound bites over nuanced sentiment. It becomes a forum for cheer leading or outrage with little to anchor these heightened feelings – beyond a previous incendiary comment.

Some council members, myself included, do occasionally weigh in briefly on online discussions, when setting the record straight can be done simply to avoid the spread of misinformation.

But I want to urge you to take full advantage of your residency in MoWest. Contact us directly via email or the Town website. Come to a council meeting. Stop us on the street. We're not in these jobs for the glamour. We're in these jobs to listen, to inform and to ensure – to the best of our ability – that the Town is well run.

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## Snow clearing. Why we do what we do. (February, 2022, Informer)



### SNOW CLEARING: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

We're very proud of our snow clearing in MoWest, but every year we get questions about the process. Let me take you behind the scenes to explain why we do what we do.

#### When do snow operations start?

We initiate plowing and salting once 2 cm of snow has fallen, day or night. In fact, we have two employees on the night shift for the peak winter months to ensure the snow operations can begin immediately. The actual snow removal generally begins once 20 cm has accumulated.

There are exceptions to this policy, however, under certain weather conditions. For instance, a mix of winter rain and freezing temperatures can block the catch basins causing flooding or turn the snow drifts into blocks of ice. So we may need to remove the snow before 20 cm has fallen.

#### Why do we hire contractors to clear the snow?

Our own employees do all the initial plowing after a storm but snow removal requires more equipment and manpower than we have available.

It's also more economical to rent some of the more specialized, expensive equipment than to purchase it. A grader, for instance, would cost around \$500,000 and would only be used about 10-15 times a year.

So our own crews take care of about half the job and we hire contractors for the other half.

#### Why doesn't the Town blow snow onto lawns instead of trucking it away?

We're extremely lucky to have a snow dump here in Town. It makes our removal operation highly efficient. Without a local snow dump, it would likely be more efficient to blow snow onto lawns as some communities do.

Our costs are measured by the time it takes the crews to clear the snow. And it's actually much faster to blow the snow into trucks than onto lawns, where the operator must stop constantly to aim the blower away from driveways, gardens, walkways, etc.

That said, under certain circumstances we have no choice but to blow onto lawns. When our snow dump is nearly full, we must resort to blowing on lawns. We've witnessed this in some very heavy snow years.

#### Why is the snow from the southern end of Town removed last?

The removal operation is planned to maximize efficiency. The centre of Town has its snow removed first with crew #1, to clear the route to the snow dump (behind the Arena) and make Westminster accessible.

The north end is the next priority (usually with crew #2) fo-

cused around Edinburgh and its high density streets like Radcliffe.

Finally, both crews tackle the southern end. This is the most challenging area because the trucks must navigate around the train schedule which can slow the operation considerably. So, frequently, both crews are put on this job to ensure it can be completed in less time, between rush hours.

Using this method, the whole Town can be cleared in three-four days.

#### What are some of the biggest obstacles to snow removal in Town?

The biggest obstacles are literally "obstacles" in the way of clearing operations: vehicles that remain on the street after the warning signs are posted; cars in driveways that stick out onto the sidewalk, impeding the sidewalk plows; and snow pushed onto the street and sidewalk by residents and contractors.

Our sidewalk equipment, in particular, can only handle so much snow accumulation which is why some sidewalks may remain blocked until the snow can be removed.

Please send me your questions and I'll try to incorporate them into my next article.

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## Why don't we blow snow onto front yards? (Informer, March-April 2020)



### THE SCOOP ON SNOW REMOVAL

On an early February morning, after a heavy snow fall, I sat and watched the snow clearing crew remove snow from my street. That day we had received about 40 cms, adding to that challenge was the snow pushed into the street by private contractors. I saw the grader equipment pass by once, pushing the snow off the road to one side. It passed two more times, before the snow blower came along and blew the large pile into a line of waiting trucks. That day there was so much snow it took three full trucks just to clear off a small section of the street.

The crew had to be particularly efficient that day because, not only had we had a major snow fall, we were expecting another 15 cm the next day. You might wonder why we were clearing the current accumulation if we were expecting more snow shortly. The answer is very simple; it's done to maintain safe car and pedestrian circulation, two of the Town's priorities. Furthermore, large and heavy amounts of snow can damage our removal equipment.

That day in February, a couple of streets were used as "snow corridors", designated by orange no parking signs. Parking (including permit parking) is prohibited on these streets to allow easier and safer circulation for the large equipment and trucks hauling snow to the dump behind the Public Works building. Did you know that during a snow removal operation there are 300 to 400 truckloads of snow transported to the dump in a 12 hour shift? It takes an average of 5 minutes to drive from where the snow is collected to the dump, traffic and train permitting. Delays caused by parked cars on the street can add hours to the operation and thousands of dollars to our annual budget.

One question we are often asked is why we don't blow more snow onto private lawns and parks instead of hauling it to the

dump. There are a few reasons for this, principally that there is no significant savings in doing so. Under normal operations, the snow blower drives alongside a convoy of trucks, and as one truck is filled another immediately replaces it. The pace of the trucks is steady and efficient. Whereas, when the blower targets green areas, the operator must constantly switch the chute back to a waiting truck every time he encounters a pathway, driveway, hydrant, small tree, hydro or light pole. And each time the chute is adjusted there is a delay, which adds time and money to the operation.

Finally, now that it's March, let's celebrate the fact that most (if not all) of our snow removal operations are behind us. It won't be long before we see Public Works patching damaged green spaces and filling pot holes. And that means that spring is truly here!!

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## Valuation challenges (November, 2022, Informer)



### MAYOR'S REPORT

Councillor Colleen Feeney will have a more in-depth report concerning the new property valuations for the new valuation roll coming into effect January 1, 2023. In essence, the new property values are supposed to reflect market values from July 2021 more accurately. And, in general, though property values in Montreal West have increased 41%, your property taxes do not go up by the same amount!

Your property taxes are based on the amount of money needed to run our Town and the amount of money we need to fork over to the Agglomeration for shared services. And while we have always managed to trim our costs and keep overall increases reasonable,

I cannot say the Agglomeration has done the same.

Even before knowing what the new Agglo budget will resemble, we do know that our overall increased property values mean we will pay a larger share of the shared expenses. In fact, in 2022, we paid 0.235% of shared services. With the new roll, we will pay about 0.255% of shared services! That's an increase of 8.3%. In an ideal world, if Montreal was able to accurately control their budgets with the same rigour we control our local budget in Montreal West, we would still need to pay that 8.3% more.

However, the Agglo is FAR from ideal. Our invoice for shared services provided by the Agglo will likely increase about \$650K! That's the challenge our

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## Property Re-assessments (December, 2023, Informer)



### PROPERTY RE-ASSESSMENTS

Responsibility for preparing the assessment roll for all municipalities on the island of Montreal belongs to the *Direction de l'évaluation foncière of the Ville de Montréal*. In September 2022, they deposited a new three-year property assessment roll. The new assessment came into effect January 1, 2023 and is the basis for 2023, 2024 and 2025 tax bills.

The average increase in valuation for residential properties in Montreal West with this roll was 40.3%, with many single-family homes increasing more than this percent. Property owners had until April 30 of this year to request a re-assessment of their valuation.

Based on their recent report, the City of Montreal's Assessment Department received 45 requests for administrative reviews from Montreal West residents. To date here are the results of the files which were re-assessed:

- 25 files or 56% decreased in value
- 19 files or 42% remained unchanged, and
- 1 file or 2% increased in value

The Town has reimbursed the residents whose property values were decreased for the difference.

The only other event which may trigger a property re-assessment during the 3-year period of the roll would be a major renovation. In this case, the City of Montreal will contact the homeowner and schedule a visit. If the property owner does not agree with the new valuation, they have 60 days in which to contest it.

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