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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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**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?



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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.

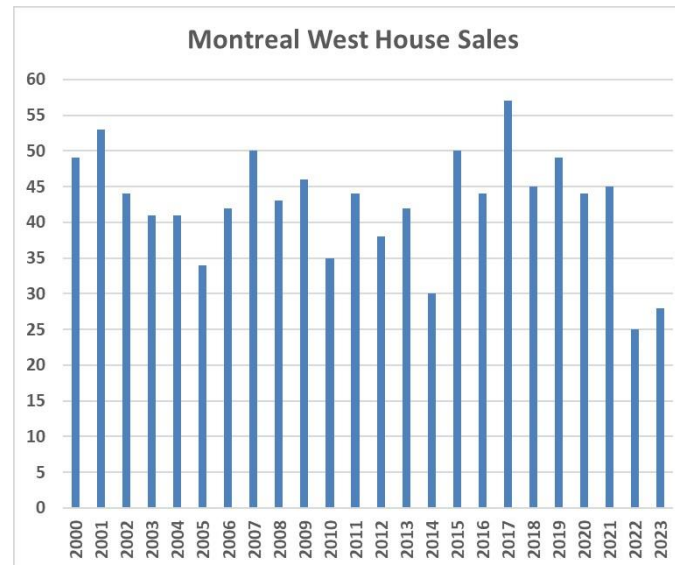
Residents who feel their valuations are too high often wonder if it's worth the money to contest. In the December 2023 Informer, councillor Feeney noted that of the 45 contestations of the 2023 roll, 25 (56%) won decreases, 19 (42%) remained unchanged, and one unfortunate had an increase.

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](mailto: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](http://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 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 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](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZmCXFu_m44)

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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](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



**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 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 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](mailto: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 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](http://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 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 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 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](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-usees/programme-transfert-infrastructures-eau-collectives-quebec-tecq-2024-2028>

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**Post 11 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 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.

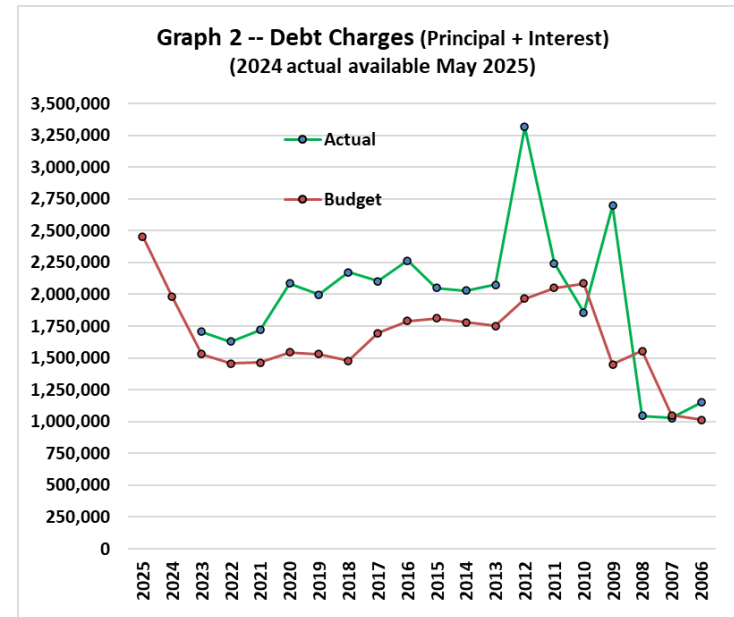
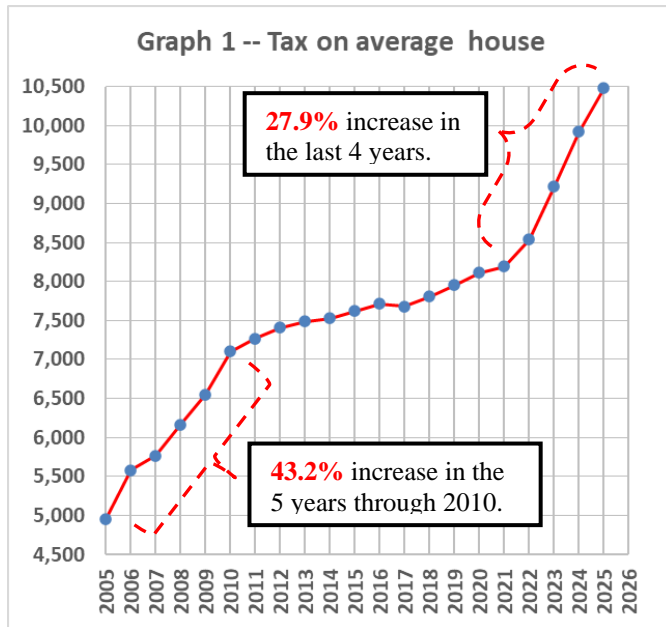
5. **Tax increase due to the rec center.** The 2024 budget (last page) attributed **\$194** of the 7.58% tax increase to the rec center. The 2025 budget (last page) attributes **\$373** for a total **\$467**. The main concern is to what extent this year's debt charges reflect a realistic final debt.

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

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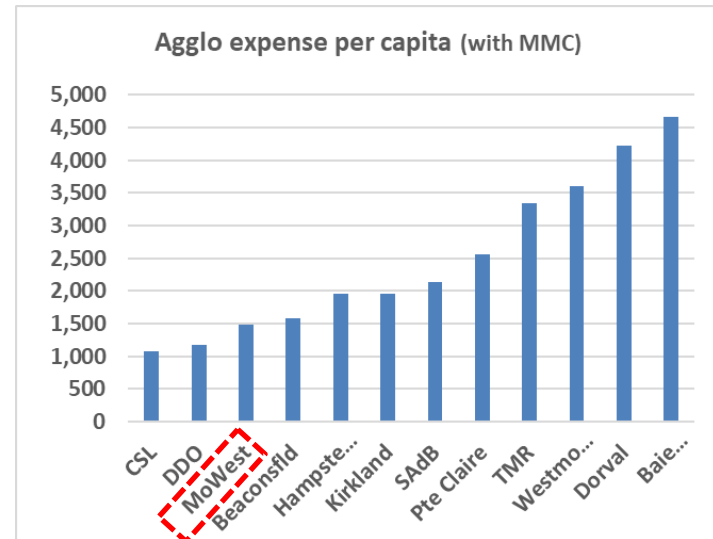
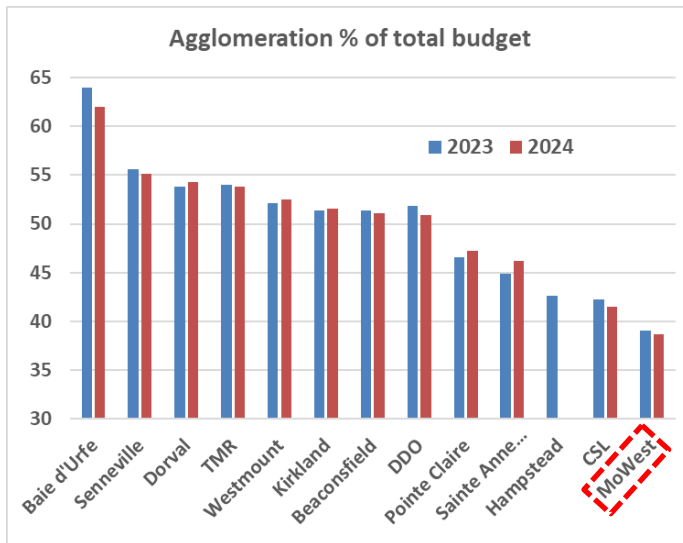
**Post 12b Blame it on the Agglo???** December 19, 2024

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](http://www.mntreal-west.com) > Data page > Property taxes > Tax comparison with other towns.



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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](mailto: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](http://www.montreal-west.com) )

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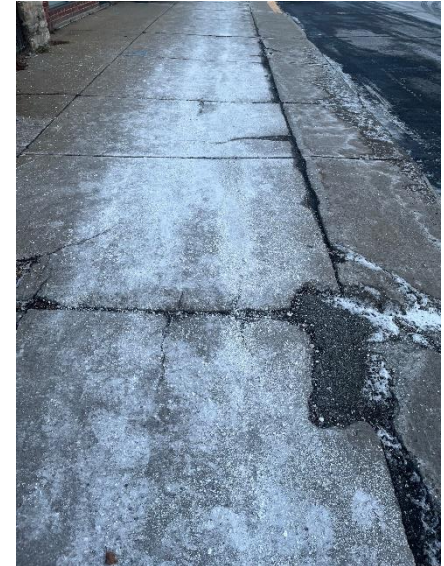




**Photo 1 January 11, 2022**



**Photo 2 Nelson January 22, 2022**



**Photo 3 Westminster Jan 24, 2024**



**Photo 4 December 04, 2024**



**Photo 5**



**Photo 6**





Photo 7 December 16, 2020



Photo 8 December 17, 2020



Photo 9 December 16, 2020



Photo 19 December 16, 2020



Photo 12 December 12, 2024



Photo 13 December 12, 2024

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