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CITY EDITION

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

The Suburban

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TMR's Mayor Roy supports mega-shopping centre deal

P.A. Sevigny
The Suburban

Last week, during an exclusive interview with *The Suburban*, TMR Mayor Philippe Roy said that both he and the town's council "...are all in favor" of the new commercial development project that will transform the town's old industrial park into a massive new multi-purpose commercial retail project. Even as a storm of protest erupted in social media following news about the city's newest mega-shopping complex, Mayor Roy cited a number of reasons as to why he believes the new development will be a success for both his city and the rest of Montreal.

"You must remember that more people pass that intersection per day than anywhere else in Quebec," said Mayor Roy. Visibly confident about what he considers to be one of the town's major civic initiatives in years, he also mentioned that "...this mall won't be competing with little stores on Laurier and St. Laurent as much

See SHOPPING CENTRE, page 11



Louise Sansregret, Kathleen Weil's executive assistant, confirmed that Weil has already secured the money that will be required to build and pay for the new tunnel.

Minister's office confirms Vendome Metro tunnel a 'done deal'

By P.A. Sévigny
The Suburban

Demonstrators showed up on a blisteringly cold morning last week outside of Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard's Montreal office on McGill College Avenue. They were demanding to know, in the words of their spokesperson Ghada Zaki, a community organizer

working for the NDG Community Council, "...when will the government get around to building a second tunnel out of the Vendome Metro station towards the new hospital?"

While everybody — including the demonstrators — did their best to cope with the morning's sub-zero temperature, Zaki told *The Suburban* that the 'Ven-

dome for All' coalition left a petition with over 2,000 signatures at the premier's office in order to request a firm timetable for the construction of a "universally accessible" second entrance to the Vendome Metro station. According to the coalition's own documents, RUTA (Regroupement des Usagers

See TUNNEL, page 7

Housing advocates call Régie 'slow and unresponsive'

By Joel Ceausu
The Suburban

Tenants in Quebec are being held hostage by a slow and unresponsive Régie de logement said a coalition of housing advocates last week.

The group protested outside the Montreal offices of Pierre Moreau, minister responsible for the tribunal, and called for an end to "interminable" waiting times, dubbing the Quebec agency the "Régie du lentement."

The group borrowed the hostage theme from the Canal Vie show *Proprio en otage*, a populist look at landlords' experiences with difficult tenants. Tenants however, says Project Genesis' Claire Abraham, are struggling to be treated fairly by the tribunal when their rights are violated.

See HOUSING, page 3

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Parent-led initiative for CSL High School

By Joel Ceausu
The Suburban

Ilana Grostern isn't messing around.

As a mother of three and a business owner, she doesn't have the time and is clearly not the type.

The Côte St. Luc resident brought a message to the English Montreal School Board last month, asking them to support her efforts to kick-start the CSL high school project, stillborn despite two recent attempts to breathe life into it.

"This is a parent-led effort," she told *The Suburban*, after informing commissioners of a Feb. 17 parents meeting. "This is first about getting people to show their interest, and find volunteers who will step forward to establish a working committee."

Syd Wise — the commissioner for Côte St. Luc and former principal of the defunct Wagar High School where the new school is planned — has confirmed that only 30 students are needed to kick off a school for 2016-17. "That is a premise we are operating on."

When asked if two failed attempts indicate that an English public high school isn't in the cards for Côte St. Luc, Grostern says it's different this time. "It's one thing for the EMSB to tell us what they want, what they think, another for parents to speak up. It was made clear to me that if we want a school then it's up to us to make it happen, to come up with the numbers."

The last attempt never mustered the numbers, owing in part to a muddled message, frequent changes to the educational project,

announcement of placement tests and a preference for top-performing students, amid chaotic public meetings where information directly contradicted previously delivered or even simultaneously publicized material.

But with a parent-driven agenda, says the Ottawa native, there is a chance for a regular English high school, in what may be the community's last kick at the can. "From my perspective, the last time there was too much talk of all the specialty programs (Jewish heritage, options and a poorly understood sports accommodation program.) The fact is, we have Royal West and Royal Vale, so there doesn't seem to be a need for more 240-schools in this area." (240-status schools are restricted public schools with specific orientations that are permitted to select students from the wider population without regard to territory).

"There is more of a need for a true public access high-school," she says, her own vision inspired by Westmount High School, "one of the best, with increasing enrolment, a French immersion stream, but overall a regular English high school, catering to the largest common denominator." That's what should have been on the table last time around she says. "This would have been a no-brainer. But officials always talk about extra programs to attract students, when that clearly is not what parents want. We are getting to the bare bones of the argument, and there is no politics involved. There are parents who want a local high school for our children. That's it."



Grostern wants parents to step up and get a new school going in Cote Saint-Luc.

Grostern set up a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/parentsforwagar) for interested parents, drawing more than 170 so far, and many are already engaged in lively discourse about the project, bouncing ideas off like-minded parents, looking for a formula to succeed where the board twice failed.

With a population of 33,000, Côte St. Luc boasts five private Jewish schools; two French and one English public elementary schools; and within the Wagar building — the EMSB's John Grant, which serves high-school-aged students with mild to severe learning difficulties; Marymount Adults Centre, as well as the board's cafeteria service and book distribution centre.

No English mainstream public high school.

The discourse about a new school is often coloured by nostal-

gia for Wagar, which once counted over 1,500 students at its peak, before enrolment dwindled owing to school closures in other districts bringing in new students and prompting many parents to withdraw their kids and opt for the private stream. The result? A large, vastly underused facility on a prime piece of land in

Côte St. Luc, valued at almost \$30 million but generating no revenue for the city, and the board desperate to fill it.

The parents' meeting will take place Feb. 17 at 7 p.m. at the Côte St. Luc Aquatic Centre, 5794 Parkhaven. For information visit www.facebook.com/groups/parentsforwagar

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HOUSING Cont'd from page 1

"The statistics often quoted — an average delay of 21 months for the category that includes causes of unsanitary conditions and lack of heating — does not mention the reality endured by tenants who are being held prisoner of a dysfunctional and ineffective justice system."

Romina Hernandez of POPIR-Comité Logement says the gov-

ernment has been unresponsive to calls for change. "We went directly to Moreau's office because it's been months and months that we are trying to communicate with the Minister without success. For years Quebec tenants have been documenting abuses and sending letters without a response."

The current Régie system, say advocates, prioritizes the interests of owners at the expense of the rights of tenants. "The latest measures proposed by the govern-

ment — hiring of special clerks and commissioners — had no impact on the waiting times for tenants. These resources only serve to maintain short deadlines for the owners' issues," said Abraham.

Tenants' rights groups are demanding that Moreau ensure the tribunal does not dismiss tenant's health and safety in pursuit of protecting financial interests of landlords, and any reform should seek to establish an equitable, transparent and timely system. ■

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