



The Suburban

QUEBEC'S LARGEST ENGLISH WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Concordia Student Union apologizes for anti-Semitism on campus

By Joel Goldenberg
The Suburban

The Concordia Student Union apologized to the Jewish community last week for what it describes as its "indifference" to concerns about anti-Semitism on campus.

The CSU itself has been criticized extensively over the years, including for co-hosting a "Passover Against Apartheid" event in 2017 and adopting the anti-Israel Boycott Divestment Sanction (BDS) campaign.

"More than anything else, this is embarrassing for us," the letter on their Facebook page says. "It is embarrassing for us because even trying to verbalize our mistakes only serves to highlight how ridiculous they are. An ongoing theme of the CSU is that we try our best to support and give a voice to those who are being discriminated against, but this is something we have neglected to do for the Jewish community. Today, we strive to acknowledge our mistakes and begin the process of correcting ourselves."

The letter says the CSU's mistakes can be summed up as indifference.

"Indifference to one of the world's old-

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CBC

Montreal, Laval curfew returns to 8 p.m.

Riot breaks out in Old Montreal

By Joel Goldenberg
The Suburban

Montreal and Laval returned to an 8 p.m. curfew starting Sunday April 11, as a COVID preventative measure, until further notice, Premier François Legault announced last Thursday afternoon.

On Thursday, it was reported that there were more than 1,600 new cases in Quebec in general. Since, there have been some 1,500 new cases a day.

"We're now in a third wave," Legault said, providing context for his announce-

ment. "I understand Quebecers who say a lot of changes are taking place. We are in the same situation as everywhere else in the world. We have to find a balance between physical and mental health. Also, Public Health provides recommendations, but at the end of the day, I'm the one who makes the decisions. You can't please everyone — as Bernard Landry said, if you want to be loved, don't go into politics. Buy a dog."

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West-end parents want new high school

"We want to keep the political aspect out of it"

By Joel Ceausu
The Suburban

"It's not right to force students to travel long distances on public transit outside of our community for an essential need" says Johanna Miller, nor is it right "to force families to pay thousands of dollars for a private school education because it's the only other viable option."

Miller is an NDG parent behind the West End High School Committee, a group of parents lobbying for a mainstream high school in the west end of Montreal.

With two of the board's special status "240" schools in the same district (Royal West and Royal Vale) requiring entrance exams and advanced academic standing, "there are no mainstream high school options west of Décarie boulevard."

Citing the EMSB's own data, Miller says more than 50% of EMSB students do not stay in the board after elementary school and have no place in a mainstream EMSB high school. "Where will our 400-plus grade 6 graduates go? Why are they choosing private schools? Is it because they always wanted to, or feel that they don't have a choice? Do they feel they have to start saving money early on and make financial sacrifices for their kids to

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Pierrefonds-Roxboro's Beis seeks drive-thru vaccine clinics

By Chelsey St-Pierre
The Suburban

Pierrefonds-Roxboro Mayor Jim Beis is advocating the benefits of drive-thru COVID-19 vaccination clinics and has offered up a possible location in his borough.

Beis has opened the discussion with the local public health authority, suggesting that the drive-thru would accommodate citizens in general and also citizens with particular needs such as persons with physical or mental handicaps, single parents and the elderly.

"We are prepared to provide what is necessary to accommodate a drive-thru clinic. Our resilience as a community and our ability to round up volunteers has proven to be successful time and



time again," Beis told *The Suburban*.

Beis suggested the parking lot next to the borough hall as a possible location.

Montreal's West Island is home to some 300,000 residents. Currently, an average of 3,500 West Islanders are receiving vaccines daily.

Beis views drive-thru clinics as a secure and efficient way to help speed up the process of getting the West Island's population vaccinated.

The drive-thru concept was successfully executed last year for testing sites in Montreal.

The West Island public health authority is examining Beis's suggestion, as well as other options, including mobile testing units similar to the testing clinics loaded aboard the STM buses last year. ■

SCHOOL

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go to high school?"

Indeed, the committee website featured a striking message about the public school system, that there is zero "obligation from the EMSB to enroll EMSB students in a 240 status school."

Westmount is the only viable alternative because Marymount is not a French immersion school. Commissioner Joe Lalla says improved transportation to Westmount could help local families, but it is at capacity and may soon start refusing students.

"I believe earlier attempts to create a mainstream school failed primarily because it was a top-down project" Miller told *The Suburban*, adding the effort "also brought in a city council and then the community without consulting parents," one that ended up yet again as a special status proposition. That effort only garnered the interest of some 40 families.

Indeed, the town hall and information sessions for families even featured some local politicians trying to convince elite Montreal student athletes to change disciplines to attend the would-be school at Wagar. "This is coming from parents and we want to keep the political aspect out of it" Miller told *The Suburban*. "Especially with an election coming up. We're not interested in those with personal political agendas."

Asked if the west-end population has been written off by the EMSB as 240 or private school clientele, Lalla told *The Suburban* that the decision to go with a 240-status last time around was made by the organizing committee at the end of the process. He is hopeful though that the EMSB administration and council of commissioners will support any initiative from parents "which has merit, is realistic and affordable, and is backed up with proper research and factual information."

As parent of a grade 4 student, Miller says "It's not right that a public school system should be failing the very people they are supposed to be servicing. We are requesting a mainstream high school that is a school for everybody, not just kids who excel academically. The board should be taking this oppor-

tunity to say: 'We are capable and are able to see this problem and look at how to handle this,' and show the government if they want, why they should maintain school board status."

For many, with three full French immersion elementary schools and dozens of families on waiting lists, the lack of local options is belying the board's devotion to bilingualism. "Parents want their kids to be bilingual with French programs and the EMSB isn't providing the services, so they are failing us there. If the West End didn't have as many elementary schools as it does there would be no question."

"If the board smartened up and did the homework that they were supposed to have done over a decade ago in terms of socio-demographics they would have seen this situation, this bubble coming. But they didn't and they still don't."

Lalla says it's untrue that there are no mainstream school options, just none nearby. "Unfortunately, some are far and some are close to capacity. What these parents want is a mainstream high school located west of Décarie. And I fully understand that." He says while the previous attempt to open a school was initiated by the board and focused primarily on Côte St. Luc, the current movement is driven by parents from NDG, Montreal West, Cote St. Luc and Hampstead. "This latest request is well organized, determined and serious."

After the previous failed attempt, Royal Vale High School made some changes to its program to make it easier for students to be admitted, such as offering a Flex French program (similar to Core English) and a number of concentrations. (French immersion was cancelled and replaced by Flex in Secondary 2 and 3 this year, a decision that parents were advised of 90 minutes before the start of the school year and attributed to pandemic guidelines.)

The committee will be gathering signatures until April 30 for a petition that will be presented to the board at the May 5 council meeting. Miller says she is hoping to see at least 1000 signatures.

For more information or to sign the petition, visit <https://westendhighschool.wordpress.com> ■

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