

Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue celebrates 250 years

Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue recently held an important celebration: its 250th anniversary. Canada's first Jewish congregation, the synagogue opened its doors in 1768. Founded by Simon Levy and Aaron Hart, it was established in a rented space on St. James St. Today, it is home to a culturally diverse membership of families from Iraq, Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Eastern Europe and France.

Gala co-chairs were Westmounters **Ron Mashaal**, attending with his wife **Sandra Mashaal**, and **Arlene Abitan**, with **Henri Abitan**. Emcee was *Breakfast TV* personality **Catherine Verdon-Diamond**. Guests of honour were **Rabbi Howard** and **Dr. Norma Joseph**. Dignitaries in attendance included **Antonio Luis Bullón Camarasa**, consul general of Spain; **May and David Levy**, consul general of Israel; **Irwin Cotler**, CJA CEO **Yair Zlak**; and municipal politicians **Lionel Perez**, **Mindy Pollak**,



Suzanne & Edmond Elbaz, Irwin Cotler and David & Maya Levy.

Dida Berku, and **Magda Popeanu**; provincial legislator for D'Arcy-McGee **David Birnbaum**; **Patrick Benaroch**, CJA chair; and **Kathy Assayag**, executive director, Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal.

Prime minister **Justin Trudeau** sent a video congratulatory message.

Dinner was followed by a concert by internationally renowned singer **Enrico Ma-**

cias. The Shaar Hashomayim's cantor **Gideon Zelemyer**, winner of a Grammy with Leonard Cohen, sang to Rabbi Joseph. Committee members were **Lily and Fred Bilbul**, **Henri Elbaz** (president CSUQ), **Samia and Sabah Bekhor**, CJA pres **David Amiel**, **Joseph Nuss**, former MP **David Berger**, MP **Anthony House-**

father, **Jacques Saada** and **Sylvain Abitol**. Also in attendance were **Rony Gabbay**, **David Nathaniel**, **Ronald and Myriam Reuben**, **Joseph Sasson**, **Morris Goodman**, **Monika and Mike Yuval**, **Stephen Gross**, **Gloria and Marc Kakon**, **Irwin Miller**, **Sue Carol Isaacson**, **Brenda and Sam Gewurz**, **Raisa and Armand Afilalo**, **Marie-Elaine and Marc Afilalo**, **Sandra** and **Albert Mashaal**, **Gilda** *continued on p. 18*



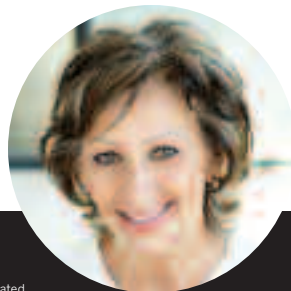
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'Exclusivity' an issue**Talks ongoing over Dropbike, but no bikes on the road – yet**

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Will Dropbikes be back in Westmount this summer as an additional bike-sharing service to Bixi?

The answer depends on the outcome of discussions with the Dropbike organization over a three-year proposed contract it submitted to the city, according to Mayor Christina Smith. Last year's service was a pilot project that resulted in 600 rides over two months.

"As of now, we haven't reached an agreement," Smith said.

Dropbike, according to city reports, has proposed – at no cost to the city – to expand its network here from 50 to 100 bikes and from 13 drop-off havens to 25.

Still under discussion, however, is an "exclusivity" condition from Dropbike, which would not affect Bixi, but comes during a time that Smith describes as "an ever-changing market" for bike-sharing services.

And, a changing need, said Councillor Philip Cutler, commissioner of infrastructure and innovation, who introduced the Dropbike pilot program to Westmount last year (see story July 4, 2017, p. 1).

Last year's 600 Dropbike rides and a 3.8-percent increase in Bixi use show that Westmount residents are using active transportation, he points out. "There's definitely a need for bike sharing services as a tool. It takes a while to change people's behaviours."

Cutler was commenting on figures reported in meeting minutes of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and the general committee of council, both dated April 16.

Negotiate city conditions

According to the general committee minutes, it was agreed "in principle" that

Bixi, cont'd. from p. 1

council members to propose the expansion of a few of the existing docking stations as a way of exploring a less expensive alternative to installing additional stations.

The original installation of the Bixi stations in Westmount seven years ago, along with ongoing supply and servicing, had been a one-time cost of \$221,118 (see story May 10, p. 3).

The city does not charge Bixi for the use of the space for docking stations at the current locations: Victoria and de Maisonneuve, Victoria Hall, Sherbrooke and Argyle, St. Catherine and Redfern (near

the Dropbike contract be negotiated to contain a number of conditions, including that the organization continue to share its GPS data with the city. Routes taken by cyclists presented in heat maps would direct the city in its placement of bicycle paths.

No mention was made of an "exclusivity" condition from the organization.

The minutes do, however, state that "while the city wants to prioritize promoting cycling, it will also recommend that Dropbike continue to consider the addition of scooters to their service as an alternative for certain circumstances," similar to an electric scooter sharing program called Bird operating out of Santa Monica, California.

First municipality

Westmount became the first municipality in Canada to introduce Dropbikes with the installation of the first havens August 28 (see photo September 5, p. 26). As a result, users in Westmount were – and still would be – able to use them only within Westmount territory, which Cutler says he personally finds very handy.

Referring to his experience last year, he said, "When I'm leaving city hall, I just jump on a Dropbike to go to Greene Ave. very quickly. It has a nice Westmount feel to it."

He says other havens he used were at Greene and de Maisonneuve, Victoria and Sherbrooke (at the CIBC) and Victoria and de Maisonneuve.

Last year, the havens were designated by orange tape around their perimeter, but Dropbike had offered to add bicycle racks at the city's request. It was also proposed that the bicycles be put out by June at the latest and removed by November 15.

Meanwhile, ways to expand some Bixi stations are also being explored (see separate story, p. 1).

Westmount High) and Greene and de Maisonneuve.

Meanwhile, the city is discussing a proposed three-year contract to supply Dropbikes introduced as a pilot project last year (see separate story, above).

Interestingly, while the docking station at Greene and de Maisonneuve is the busiest, its original number of 15 bikes was reduced to 11 after the reconstruction of Greene Ave. when it was discovered that not enough space had been left for the full number, recalled Dan Lambert, president of the Association of Pedestrians and Cyclists of Westmount.



David Berger; his mother, Ilse Hatam; and Henri Elbaz.

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and Sylvain Abitbol, Felicia Mayoff-Perez and Lionel Perez, Nicole and Jacques Saada, Robert Cutler, Alvin Segal, James Sinclair, Demo Trifonopoulos, Eric Aintabi, Martha and Alfred Lawee and Dalhia and Philip Lawee.

Generous sponsors included CIBC, the Mashaal Family, the Aintabi family, Irwin

Miller, Philip Lawee and family, David Nathaniel and family, HSBC, RBC, David Azouri and family, Ron Gabbay and family, Arlene Abitan and family, Mike Yuval and family, Marc Kakon and family, Delmar International, Gewurz family (Proment), Reuben and Goodman families (Medicom and Pharmascience) and Armand Afilalo (MEP Technologies).

Comin' Up**TUESDAY, JULY 3**

City council meeting. City hall. 7:30 pm.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4

Guided tour of the MUHC's Glen site. 1001 Décarie Blvd, McConnell Resource Centre (RC level). Free, but book at heritage@muhc.mcgill.ca. 10:30 am to 11:30 am. Also on July 18, August 8 and 22, September 5 and 19, October 3 and 17, November 7 and 21, December 5 and 19.

SUNDAY, JULY 29

Sundays at the Shaar presents Dr. Steven Lapidus, Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies at Concordia University on "Judaism and Sexuality". \$5 per person, includes light lunch. Reservations appreciated: 514-937-9474 x 139. Shaar Hashomayim, 425 Metcalfe Ave. 12 noon.

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