

Cabinet du Maire
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Office of the Mayor
City Hall
4333 Sherbrooke Street W.
Westmount, QC H3Z 1E2

January 25, 2018

Dear Fellow Citizen,

On behalf of my colleagues on City Council and me, please accept our best wishes for a healthy and happy 2018.

We have been hard at work since our election last November, and we are determined to fulfill our campaign commitments and offer Westmounters an open, transparent and accessible administration. It is critical that you are aware of how your tax dollars are being spent, and I am pleased to provide you with an overview of the City's 2018 operating budget.

Our intention had been to present a budget that is in keeping with the following guidelines:

1. Limit the increase in taxation for local services to the rate of inflation. This limit excludes any increases in our apportionment from the Agglomeration Council of Montreal or from the Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC);
2. Continue the pace of infrastructure investment and ensure that the work is completed on time and on budget;
3. Continue with the sound fiscal management that has served Westmount residents well.

Consistent with these guidelines and after a two-year freeze, we were planning to increase the property tax bill for the average single family dwelling by less than 1%, which is below the 1.7% rise in the cost of living in Quebec.

But on January 10, a wrench was thrown into our plans.

Despite the fact that Projet Montreal campaigned on the promise that taxes would not increase beyond the rate of inflation, the City of Montreal is unilaterally raising Westmount's share of agglomeration costs by a staggering 6.7% rather than the 2% we had originally forecasted.

We are frustrated because there was no prior consultation or notice, and cities across the island of Montreal are already paying a much higher percentage than Montreal.

Although we will continue to work with the Association of Suburban Municipalities to convince the Quebec Minister of Municipal Affairs to look at the current structure of the Agglomeration and Mayor Plante to reconsider, we have to be realistic and assume the City of Montreal's tax increase will be adopted. In order to cover the shortfall, we are planning a 3.09% tax increase this year for the average single family dwelling, as well as an increase in the upper bracket of the transfer duties (welcome tax) from 1.5% to 2%.

In 2018, the municipal tax rates (per \$100 of valuation) will be:

For residential properties containing 5 housing units or less	\$0.8232
For apartment buildings with 6 or more units	\$0.8335
For non-residential properties	\$3.2182

The value of the average single-family dwelling in 2018 will be \$1,597,925. With a 2018 residential rate of \$0.8232, the tax bill of the average single-family dwelling will be \$13,154.49, as compared to \$12,760.08 in 2017.

Other highlights of the budget:

- Westmount is a built City, and our position is that we should not be borrowing in order to maintain our roads, sidewalks, sewers and hydro network. With this in mind, we are continuing with our Pay-As-You-Go approach to funding our investment in infrastructure.
- In the past few years we have almost doubled our infrastructure spending. I am pleased to report that, for a second consecutive year, we have completed the projects that we set out to do. Fortunately, many of them were finished before the first significant snowfall.
- All of us are conscious that these projects, while necessary, are disruptive. We are determined to continually improve our communications with residents prior to and during any major infrastructure work that will affect them.
- We have budgeted \$15.8 million for infrastructure in 2018, which includes funds for the ongoing restoration of our conservatory and greenhouses so residents will be able to enjoy them again. At the same time, we will continue with the implementation of our multi-year renovation plan of City buildings.
- While we will continue to work hard to control operational expenses, we are investing in targeted areas like our Urban Planning department. We have added staff in light of the increase in the number of permit applications and the need to update the guidelines and by-laws pertaining to Urban Planning.

I, like you, believe Westmount is a wonderful place to live. This is vastly attributable to the people who choose to live here and the services and programs we all enjoy. Our commitment as elected officials is to serve as responsible stewards of our City. I hope you agree that our 2018 operating budget represents a forward-looking and responsible investment in our community. You can also consult the budget information on the City's website at westmount.org or at the Westmount Public Library.



Christina M. Smith
Mayor