

**About 17 per cent of West Islanders use public transportation to get to work.
Census figures no surprise
Improvements to public transportation needed
Westend Chronicle BY ELYSE AMEND March 12nd 2008**

Census 2006 figures released by Statistics Canada last week show that only about 17 per cent of West Islanders use public transportation to get to work, compared to 72 per cent who opt to use their own vehicle, and some say this shows the need for changes in our public transportation system.

"The statistics don't surprise me. They're right in line with what we've been working with," said Gerry Arsenault, the director general of the West Island CLD, a non-profit organization subsidized by the government that promotes economic development in the area.

According to Arsenault, when the public transportation system was developed over 30 years ago, it was designed to get people from the West Island to the downtown sector. However, today there are more West Islanders who work close to home, and there are more people coming to the West Island from other areas.

"The public transportation system does not accommodate them," Arsenault said. He added that while the population has grown north of Highway 40, the road network there has not been completed, which is another reason people choose to take their cars.

Dollard des Ormeaux Mayor Ed Janiszewski was also not surprised by the Statistics Canada figures.

"There's good reason for it," he said.

About 73 per cent of workers in Dollard head to work in their own vehicles and about another eight per cent are passengers. Only 16 per cent use public transportation.

"It takes you up to an hour to get to the Côte Vertu metro station, and then it takes you another hour to get wherever you're going," Janiszewski continued. "Anything over an hour, people get in their cars. We need improvement."

Among other measures, Janiszewski said more parking space at train stations would take more passenger vehicles off our highways. Dollard is currently working with the Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT) to add 100 new spaces at the Sunnybrooke station.

Arsenault said service improvements announced by the STM at the end of 2007 should help public transportation in the West Island over the next few years. For example, extending the 470 Express bus – which runs between Gouin Boulevard in Pierrefonds, the Fairview terminus in Pointe Claire, and the Côte Vertu metro — to run every day during the week is a "godsend," Arsenault said.

"And if we can get the airport shuttle going, that'll make it easier for people from the West Island to get downtown, and it will be easier for downtowners to get to the West Island. I'm sure that if it's made more convenient, people will use it. I'm convinced of that," he said. "It's going to be a series of little steps. They'll make a difference for people living in the West Island and people working in the West Island."

PULLQUOTE:

The public transportation system does not accommodate them. — Gerry Arsenault