

Montrealers O'Hara-Byrne and Hamamdjian are CTV's team in London



Mike Cohen

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I got to know both of these native Montrealers as they were cutting their teeth in the business; Hamamdjian at the local CTV newsroom, then known as Pulse, and O'Hara-Byrne with Global. Hamamdjian joined CTV National News in 2009 out of Ottawa. O'Hara-Byrne moved to London after a stint as CTV's Beijing Bureau Chief. He spent three years covering stories across China.

Hamamdjian began on-air reporting for CTV Montreal in 2006, so her rapid rise is impressive. She says she still pinches herself when she walks through the streets of London. "I ask myself 'how did I get here?' and then I realize how really fortunate I am," she told me. "I love Montreal, but when they say that London is the center of the world culturally and financially they are not kidding. It is impossible not to have something to do and see here."

As for O'Hara-Byrne, he says "the posting in London is really a wish come true. The CTV bureau here is responsible for all

of Europe so that offers an endless supply of fascinating and challenging stories, everything from the battlefields of past wars to ongoing conflicts in places such as Ukraine. On days off, the city itself is always fascinating."

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THE MONARCHY: After seeing the Changing of the Guard, experiencing the walking tour of the State Rooms at Buckingham Palace, visiting the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, among other things, I must now express my renewed appreciation for the monarchy. I now see that one must travel to the United Kingdom to fully understand the Royal Family's importance and how fortunate we are to be part of the British Commonwealth.

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seum walls," says Levy. "We are out in London, on a double-decker bus, in Trafalgar Square. It's a juicy idea we haven't explored."

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Hampstead blood drive takes place Aug. 27

By Joel Goldenberg
The Suburban

Hampstead Councillor Michael Goldwax made an emotional appeal for people to participate in and volunteer for the town's eighth annual blood drive, taking place from 1 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 27 at the Adessky Community Centre in Hampstead Park.

"This blood drive is very special to me," the councillor said. "As most council members know, this is something I brought to

the town because my son Brandon was born premature, weighing in at just over a pound. He needed blood transfusions and during that time, in 1996, there was the Hepatitis C scare, and I didn't want anybody else's blood used other than mine. Direct donations did not exist in Quebec and I worked within hours following his birth with the doctors and the Red Cross — Héma-Québec didn't exist then — to allow direct donations.

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CANADA POST

Cont'd from page 1

Lac St. Louis MP Francis Scarpaleggia spoke in the House of Commons about Canada Post last January when cuts to services were announced.

Scarpaleggia said that Canada Post's services "are essential services. Because this is an essential service, it is structured

like a crown corporation and not like a private company that is not accountable to the Government of Canada.

"As a crown corporation — or quasi-governmental organization, if you would prefer — the Canada Post Corporation is required to consult before making a major policy change. It apparently conducted consultations before it decided to stop home mail delivery," said Scarpaleggia at

the time.

The Suburban spoke to Scarpaleggia who believes that "Canada Post has not made a case for the changes it wants to impose on Canadians."

The Lac St. Louis MP also noted that due to Quebec's, and the West Island's rapidly aging population, "switching from door to door service to community mailboxes will be a major inconvenience, especially in our harsh winters and my concern is some seniors will injure themselves by simply trying to get to the mail.

In the House of Commons, Scarpaleggia spoke about a couple within the riding where "both members had multiple sclerosis. The community mailbox was on a little island across from their house. They

had serious problems getting their mail. First of all, the mailbox was too high. Second, the box itself was too deep, so they could not reach all the way to the back to get all of their mail. Canada Post was contacted, and a comedy of errors ensued. In the end, the lock was changed, and this person could no longer get mail at all."

Scarpaleggia maintains that the crown corporation "hasn't shown an ability to adapt to the new realities of the 21st century. Canada Post needs to look at more creative alternatives before wiping out home delivery."

The Lac St. Louis MP suggested that in lieu of abandoning door to door service completely, scale back home delivery to twice or three times a week. ■

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COHEN

Cont'd from page 8

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Laval's Daniele Hamamdjian makes it big with CTV in London



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I got to know both of these native Montrealers as they were cutting their teeth in the business, Hamamdjian at the local CTV newsroom then known as Pulse and O'Hara-Byrne with Global. Hamamdjian joined CTV National News in 2009. She recently covered Nelson Mandela's funeral in South Africa, the Commonwealth Games in Scotland, the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia and the crisis in Ukraine. While previously assigned to the Ottawa Bureau, she travelled with the Prime Minister's office numerous times.

Hamamdjian began on-air reporting for CTV Montreal in 2006. A Concordia University journalism graduate, she actually began her career as general assignment reporter at the Santa Monica Daily Press in California. Born in Cairo, Egypt, she lived in Los Angeles before immigrating to Montreal with her family in the late 1980s and settling in Laval. She speaks French, English, and is conversational in Arabic and Italian.

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when she walks through the streets of London. "I ask myself 'how did I get here?' and then I realize how really fortunate I am," she told me. "I love Montreal, but when they say that London is the center of the world culturally and financially they are not kidding. It is impossible not to have something to do and see here."

During her time at the CTV Ottawa bureau, Hamamdjian clearly impressed her superiors. She was part of the first international reporting team on the ground in Haiti after the devastating earthquake that rocked the country in 2010, and she also travelled to Guantanamo Bay in August 2010 to report on the Omar Khadr case. "Guantanamo Bay was probably the strangest place I have ever been to," she says.

Hamamdjian's coverage of international affairs is balanced by the Canadian stories she has covered, including the 2011 Federal Election. Her coverage of the Attawapiskat housing crisis in 2011 led to testimonies of alleged rampant sex abuse in Attawapiskat and native communities across the country. And then there is the Nigel Wright coup. Wright was the chief of staff to Prime Minister Harper and got in very hot water when he handed over a personal cheque of \$90,000 to Senator Mike Duffy to try and get the latter out of a jam. He ultimately was forced out of the job because of this. Nobody seemed able to corner Wright for an interview. When Hamamdjian found out that Wright took his daily jog at 4:30 a.m. she decided on a stake out. "He was not too happy to

see us and I had to run after him," she says. "Everyone knows that you do not run away from a camera. It does not look good. So he stopped and gave me the interview."

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Car parts thieves targeting catalytic converters

By Robert Frank
The Suburban

Thieves have stolen more than \$130,000 worth of catalytic converters in Laval this year from individual car owners, Laval Police disclosed last week.

"Since Jan. 1, there have been 86 thefts on Laval territory," Const. Franco di Genova told *The Suburban*.

The thieves have mostly been targeting older, low-end General Motors cars and vans in retail parking lots.

"Pontiac Sunfire and Montana as well as Chevrolet Cavalier and Venture models from 1998-2005," Const. di Genova reported. "Two delivery trucks also had their catalytic converters stolen, which are much bigger and costlier to replace."

The catalytic converters contain a thin internal coating of platinum that dramatically reduces air pollution. Even though there is only a tiny amount of platinum in a catalytic converter, the metal is worth more than gold, fetching \$1,623/oz last week.

The devices can cost \$1,500 to replace (or

up to \$5,000 for a truck) and the stolen converters fetch \$130 from used parts dealers, according to United States law enforcement officials.

The converters also contain other valuable metals like palladium whose price has this year jumped 20 percent to \$938/oz, and rhodium, whose price has remained stable and was worth \$1,239/oz last week.

"Back in 2008, we had a similar rash of such thefts," recalled Const. di Genova. "One dealership had so many stolen from new cars on his lot that when the cars arrived from the factory he had his mechanic remove the catalytic converters and install them only when the cars were sold."

"Detectives subsequently made about six arrests," he added. "That's what is happening again in 2014."

In the meantime, motorists can protect their converters by etching a unique number on them. Muffler shops like Express AutoCare on St. Elzéar in Fabreville offer to weld a protective metal bracket around your converter to stymie would-be car-part crooks. ■

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