

# EYE ON MONTREAL

NAMES IN THE NEWS IN THE CITY

By MIKE COHEN

**AZRIELI'S LEGACY:** Businessman and philanthropist David J. Azrieli, who passed away in 2014, left an extraordinary legacy. I am proud to say I had the opportunity to interview him on many occasions here and in Israel, where he pioneered the construction of shopping malls. I remember going to see him at his downtown headquarters, which in 2002 was transformed into Canada's first Sofitel on Sherbrooke Street West near Stanley. Only recently did my family and I have our first opportunity to dine at the hotel's prestigious restaurant Le Renoir(<https://>

[restaurant-renoir.com](https://restaurant-renoir.com)). We were seated on their exceptional terrace and enjoyed a meal fit for a king. Inspired by French cuisine, infused with international flavors and elevated with local ingredients, Le Renoir tells a story of Montréal's vibrant culture. Critically acclaimed celebrity Chefs Olivier Perret and Clément Tilly have put together innovative menus, and ultra-chic settings. Renoir Restaurant has received two "Toques" in Montreal's first edition of the prestigious French gastronomy guide Gault & Millau and the best grade out of all hotel restaurants in the city.

I can see why and we will be back, especially while the terrace is open.

**A NEW HILTON:** Westbury Montreal is an impressive project offering a brand new neighbourhood to its residents, leaving no one indifferent. The four phases of the project feature luxury condos with high-end finishes as well as breathtaking common spaces. In addition, thanks to the many shops located within the project (PA Supermarket, Starbucks®, Forno West), its enviable proximity to the Namur metro station and major highways, and the huge park

of over 40,000 square feet located across the street from the project, Westbury Montréal ensures a dynamic daily life for its residents. Also, with the construction of the Hilton Garden Inn/Hilton Homewood Suites, which includes Brasserie Blandino and Taqueria Pancho, the new Westbury Montreal borough is becoming a landmark where it is good to meet. The Jewish community has already embraced this property for family stays, simchas in their ballroom and dinners at Blandino. I recently met with Devmont  
*(Pease turn to page 17)*

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President Sam Scalia and enjoyed an outstanding breakfast at Blandino. Both the food and service were impeccable. There is an outdoor terrace for the summer. You can read all about the two hotels at: <https://www.westburymontreal.com/en/hotel/>. Sam Scalia and his brother Joe have donated almost \$1 million to the MultiCaf Community Cafeteria in Côte des Neiges since 2011. Recently, they unveiled a \$150,000 donation to assist the organization in its mission to provide affordable meals and several food services to more than 7,000 low-income residents in the Côte des Neiges area.

**PLAYGROUND:** Members of the Jewish community seeking an alternative to the Montreal Casino have found it at Playground across the Mercier Bridge in Kahnawake. The facility first

*(Please turn to following page)*

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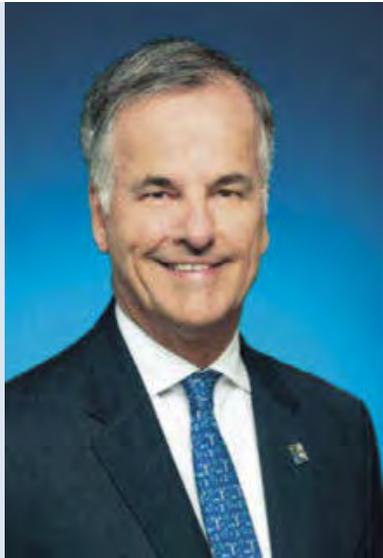
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opened 12 years ago and Chief Marketing Officer Phil Sabbah has been part of the operation since day one.

“When we started here, it was a poker room with customers packed in like sardines,” Sabbah said. “With each expansion we have increased our space, offerings and clientele and for the next one we are really excited.”

Playground’s initial expansion was completed in late 2012 to welcome players who flocked to the club’s first World Poker Tour event, which drew the attention of the poker world. Since then the venue has hosted multiple international events. Playground captured the 2017 American Poker Awards Event of the Year award for hosting the record-

breaking and exciting partypoker Millions North America competition.

The Electronic Gaming Space at Playground has grown to over 600 machines and over 30,000 square feet of space. They broke ground on the most ambitious expansion yet in 2018, with plans for a luxury hotel, two new restaurants, a live entertainment spot, a new poker room and an even larger variety of Electronic Gaming Devices. Sabbah, who is Jewish, told me that the first three of the planned six floors for this building will be ready by the fall to accommodate the restaurants, entertainment space and the poker room.

Playground is located at 1500 Unit C Route

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**AN INSPIRING EXHIBIT:** For most of her life, Natalie Bassel has gained notice as a makeup artist and the vice-president of marketing and sales for a consulting firm. The devoted Jewish mother of three and grandmother of five always had a love for painting, selling some works of art via word of mouth. Now, at the age of 75 years young, it is time for Natalie to check one major item off her bucket list. With the support of her husband Stan, along with Earl Pinchuk and Gary Blair of the Art for Healing Foundation, she recently presented her first solo exhibition at Galerie Erga. Pinchuk notes that Natalie has been painting since she was 25 but has never shown

paintings in a public venue. "Gary and I were with her a few years ago and she said that her dream was to have a solo show," he said. "Finally, we made it happen."

**MAJOR UP-GRADES AT THE Y:** The Sylvan Adams YM-YWHA (the "Y"), Montreal's Jewish Community Centre, has officially unveiled the completion of major upgrades to its fitness centre. A ribbon-cutting event was held on June 14. Made possible thanks to a generous donation by Sylvan Adams, phase I of the \$8-million-dollar project was an extensive renovation of the Y's locker rooms and health club facilities. Phase II was the construction of an all-new 13,500-square-foot fitness centre, tailored to the needs of the communities that the Y serves.

*Mike Cohen's email address is [info@mikecohen.ca](mailto:info@mikecohen.ca)*

**WORLD IN REVIEW**

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Arizona has a big Jewish community, so there's going to [be] a bunch of kosher food," he said. "Once I start moving up ... the plan is to either ship food there or bring my own food. It shouldn't be that difficult for me." As for games played Friday nights and Saturday

afternoons pitchers don't pitch every day so the Diamondbacks could conceivably adjust their rotation. But years ago Jacob's parents decided to allow their son to pitch on the sabbath as long as he walked to the ballpark.

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**Merci aux experts en bâtiment juifs, qui ont contribué à bâtir la région métropolitaine d'aujourd'hui.**

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