



Robert Ostiguy, Richard Dagenais and Camille Ross.

Alexandre Despatie and Joanne Vrakas.



COURTESY CITY TV

# City and Global set for morning show faceoff

By Mike Cohen  
The Suburban

Is there enough room on Montreal television for two English-language morning shows? We will soon find out when City Montreal's Breakfast Television debuts on August 26 at 6 a.m., competing directly against the Global Morning News, which started its run last January.

The Global show is co-anchored by veteran broadcaster Richard Dagenais and former CTV Montreal reporter Camille Ross, with Jessica Laventure handling weather and often reporting from different locations. Former CBC reporter Joanne Vrakas and Olympic diver Alexandre Despatie are the co-hosts of Breakfast Television. They will be joined on air by LiveEye correspondent Wilder Weir, the now former CJAD news reporter Laura Casella and weather and traffic specialist Catherine Verdon-Diamond.

*The Suburban* recently spent some time at both the Global and City headquarters and all parties seem pretty excited.

"Competition is always good," said a confident Karen MacDonald, the long time news director and station manager for Global Montreal. "I think being first always helps."

When we visited the Global studios at 10:30 one morning, Laventure was out doing an interview while senior producer Robert Ostiguy was sandwiched between co-hosts Ross and Dagenais, who were busy planning the next day's show. Each of them had already been up for eight hours.

"We are fine with the arrival of City on the scene,"

acknowledged Ostiguy. "I don't mind that. It adds another voice. Since we went on the air on January 28 I think we have become better known in the community and that is good."

During the three hour broadcast, Ross also does about five in-studio interviews. Laventure alternates her weather forecasts from the studio and various locales around the city. Wherever she goes, new fans follow and there is no question she has the potential to attract many new viewers. You don't have to tell City Montreal's executive producer Bob Babinski about this. He taught Laventure when she was a student in Concordia University's journalism program and saw her talents early on.

Dagenais, Ross and Laventure have developed good on air chemistry. It is evident to the daily viewer and especially the case when you see them in person. Dagenais has a good sense of humour and his jokes bounce well off Ross, whose laugh is infectious.

City Montreal plans to follow the same model as other breakfast television (BT) shows across the country. "We will combine local news, weather and traffic with the biggest celebrity interviews, community happenings and lots of big ticket giveaways," promises Babinski.

Supervising producer Jeffrey Feldman says he grew up in Toronto watching BT religiously. "It is an established show and after nine years working for CTV's eTalk, I could not resist the opportunity to join this new team," he says.

Despatie retired in June, days before City Montreal announced that he will part of the morning show.

"This amazing opportunity came my way," he told *The Suburban*. "I am happy to work in English. It opens

doors for the future."

Besides the endless array of interviews he has done since he was a teen, Despatie has also acted in some movies. At the 2010 Winter Olympics, he was part of the French-language television crew. He has also hosted a 17-part series for TV, radio and online, which paid tribute to the extraordinary individuals who have helped Canadian Olympians and Paralympians overcome their personal and athletic challenges.

Vrakas is excited about her new co-host.

"We knew we'd be working together for some time before the announcement," she confides. "So we started meeting at a restaurant owned by one of his friends. We clicked right away."

Weir, as the LiveEye host, will be at a different location in the city each morning. Casella, who, besides her CJAD role, gained some valuable TV exposure filling in at CTV, will be on the scene of breaking stories. Verdon-Diamond had barely six months of on air experience doing late night weather on CBC, but her personality is electrifying and viewers are likely to take a shine to her quickly. Elias Makos will serve as a new media producer and commentator. He fulfilled the latter role on a part-time basis with the CTV Montreal Noon news. Melanie Porco, a researcher at CTV Montreal, has also crossed the floor to become a BT segment producer.

**CHECK OUT THE ONLINE VERSION OF THE SUBURBAN MAGAZINE TO SEE MIKE'S VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH GLOBAL'S OSTIGUY, ROSS AND DAGENAIS AND ANOTHER WITH CITY'S CATHERINE VERDON-DIAMOND.**



Jessica Laventure (right) does a dance with an East Hill Elementary School teacher while on location.



Jeffrey Feldman and Catherine Verdon-Diamond.