

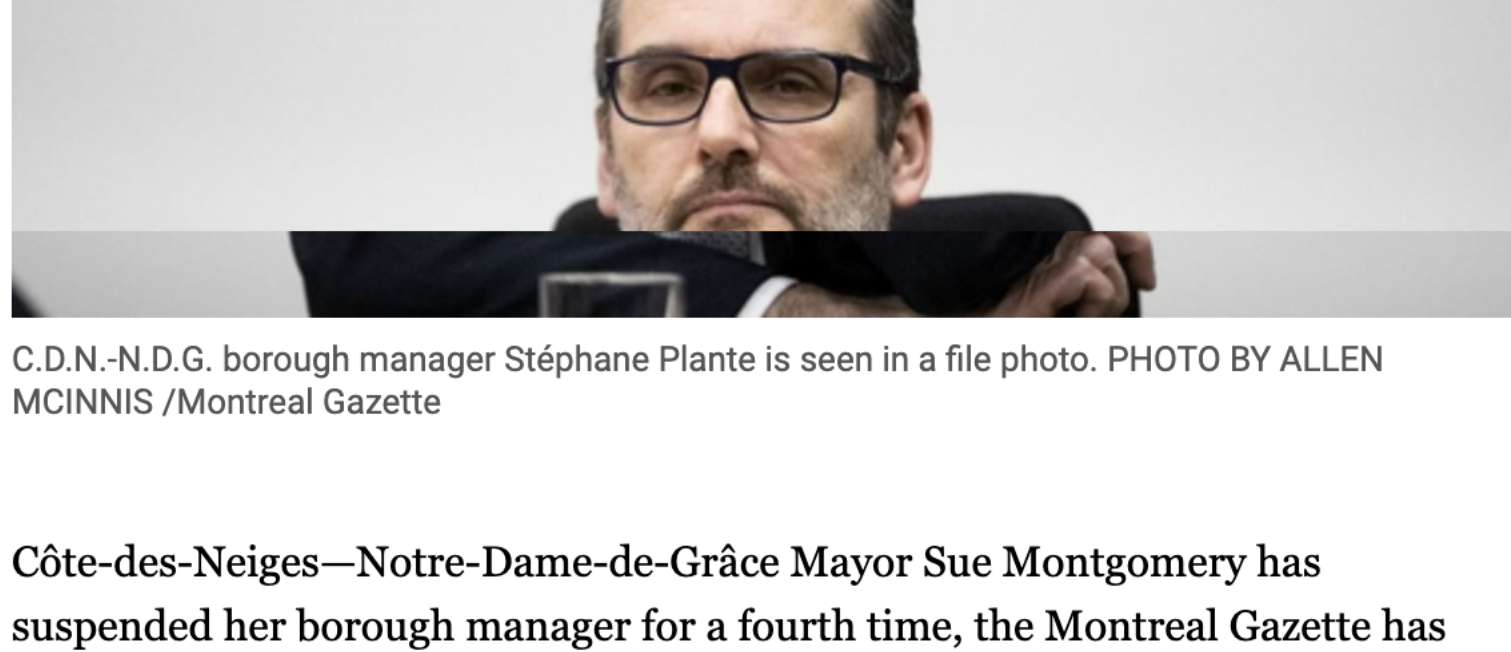
Local News

C.D.N.-N.D.G. mayor suspends borough manager over Terrebonne bike path

Sue Montgomery says the borough manager did not implement council's decision on the Terrebonne bike path

Marian Scott • Montreal Gazette

Aug 26, 2020 • Last Updated 16 hours ago • 3 minute read



C.D.N.-N.D.G. borough manager Stéphane Plante is seen in a file photo. PHOTO BY ALLEN MCINNIS /Montreal Gazette

Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce Mayor Sue Montgomery has suspended her borough manager for a fourth time, the Montreal Gazette has learned.

On Tuesday, Montgomery suspended Stéphane Plante without pay for two days for failing to implement the borough council's decision to extend the temporary bike path on Terrebonne Ave. west of Cavendish Blvd.



A special council meeting is scheduled Thursday by videoconference, where a majority vote on the six-member council could overturn the suspension.

Currently, the [controversial bike path](#), which opened in late July, runs from Girouard Ave. in the east to Madison Ave. in the west.

It has sparked a 1,500-name petition and a hail of complaints from irate N.D.G. residents, who peppered Montreal city council with questions Monday night during citizens' question period of the monthly meeting.

On June 22, the six-member borough council voted unanimously to create the path from Girouard to Belmore Ave., as part of a series of measures across the city to promote active transportation during the COVID-19 crisis.

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But Snowdon councillor Marvin Rotrand has since broken with the decision, saying he will introduce a motion at the council's September meeting calling for the bike path to be removed.

Projet Montréal councillor Peter McQueen also seems to have cooled to the path. McQueen has touted the idea of turning Terrebonne into a one-way, eastbound street, with a bike path and parking on both sides.

Loyola councillor Christian Arseneault has said he's reserving judgment on the path until the pilot project concludes in October. Côte-des-Neiges councillor Magda Popeanu, the vice-chair of Montreal's executive committee, and opposition leader Lionel Perez, the councillor for Darlington, have avoided wading into the issue.

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Whatever councillors and citizens might think of the path, Montgomery, who declined to be interviewed for this article, maintains that as the borough's top civil servant, Plante has an obligation to implement council's decisions.

While council voted to build the path from Girouard to Belmore, Plante only had it built from Girouard to Madison, a source said.

When Montgomery pressed him on why the path was not being extended further west, Plante responded that the Centre de coordination des mesures d'urgence (CCMU), the agency in charge of emergency measures, had refused permission for the westernmost portion.

However, in fact, the borough only requested permission to extend the path as far west as Cavendish, and the CCMU did not nix the portion from Cavendish to Belmore, the source said.

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The suspension is the latest salvo in Montgomery's ongoing war with her borough manager, which has led to her expulsion from the ruling Projet Montréal party and resulted in [cases before Quebec's Superior Court](#) and the [Quebec Municipal Commission](#).

It started in September when Montgomery asked the city's comptroller general and human resources department to help with problems she was having with Plante, who she felt was preventing her from moving forward on priorities like repurposing the abandoned Empress Theatre.

The request resulted in a report by the city's harassment division alleging that Montgomery's chief of staff, Annalisa Harris, had harassed Plante and a second civil servant.

Montgomery has refused to implement orders by comptroller general Alain Bond to fire Harris, or at the very least, to prevent her from having any contact with civil servants.

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Meanwhile, the path will be extended from Madison to Cavendish in the next few days.

The borough has adapted the bike path to respect the needs of students and parents at Willingdon, St. Monica's and the Mackay Centre and Philip E. Layton Schools, said Mike Cohen, a spokesperson for the [English Montreal School Board](#).

"Mayor Montgomery and Annalisa Harris were extremely helpful in regulating the situation," he said.

The board met with the project manager, who assured them there would be no bollards in front of the schools and buses could continue to drop off students as usual, he said.

The Montreal Gazette requested a response from Plante, who did not respond.

The borough council overturned Montgomery's three [previous suspensions of Plante](#) for refusing to attend meetings where Harris was present.

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