

Dorval mayor to take swing at saving golf course

Ottawa asked to intervene: Rouleau

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The mayor of Dorval will join the drive to protect a city-run golf course from being swallowed by neighbouring Trudeau-Montréal Airport.

Mayor Edgar Rouleau told residents at Monday's council meeting he plans to write letters to local MPs, as well as Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in an effort to preserve the 36-hole Golf Dorval.

In November, Aéroports de Montréal (ADM) president James Cherry announced the organization's plan to extend the airport's international jetty and to make additional room for taxiing aircraft. ADM, a federal corporation that has leased the land to Golf Dorval for 25 years, aims to take 18 holes from the public course before spring.

The rest of the course could be taken over by ADM in 2013, when the existing lease runs out, Cherry said.

The long-anticipated fall announcement was met with strong opposition from golfers and environmentalists, who say losing the course will significantly impact the community.

Rouleau told residents the land not only belongs to ADM, but to the Canadian people.

"I'm going to write to the prime minister and I'm going to write to (Public Works Minister Michael) Fortier . . . about the environmental issues of losing the green space," Rouleau said.

Paul Wilkinson of SOS Dorval said ADM's failure to consult citizens and local environmental experts on the consequences of their project — increased traffic, pollution and the loss of a green space — is disappointing.

However, he was pleased to hear Rouleau will work to save Golf Dorval.

"I'm very optimistic that (Rouleau's) going to feel the surge of people leaning towards environmental issues," said Wilkinson, who also sent a letter to Harper.

When Green Coalition vice-president David Fletcher heard that Rouleau sat with Cherry at the November news conference, he wondered about the mayor's position.

"It's difficult to assess exactly where Mr. Rouleau stands at this point," said Fletcher, who was joined by two executive members of the Green Coalition at the meeting. "Let's hope he follows through on (writing letters)."

Last year, Rouleau's name was one of 20,000 on SOS Dorval's petition.

The mayor, an avid golfer, said he sat with Cherry at the conference to express his opinion about the announcement.

He said Dorval doesn't have to agree with ADM, but the two have to work together.

"ADM is the biggest corporation that we have in Dorval. You can't just let that go," he told *The Chronicle*. "They still represent a large amount of our revenues."

Rouleau estimates ADM will pay between \$8 and \$9 million in taxes to the city this year.

Last month, *La Presse* reported the city would receive another \$4 million a year from ADM after it takes 18 holes from Golf Dorval.

Rouleau said he wasn't sure how much Dorval would get, adding a significant portion would be redirected to Montreal. He said that ADM has not kept him informed on the project's current status.

NDG-Lachine Liberal MP Marlene Jennings met with Rouleau and SOS Dorval. She said she is studying ADM's procedures.

"When there's a any major change that happens I think there should be a clear protocol where the federal agency communicates with the community," she said yesterday. "It's a problem if the mayor isn't informed. ADM should be fully informing the city of Dorval."