

No Golf Crisis in Dorval, city says

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Despite a reduction to half the size of what it used to be and construction a mere swing away, Dorval's municipally run golf course is still alive and well, a point Mayor Edgar Rouleau drove home in an interview.

"The number of golf holes has gone down a bit," acknowledged Rouleau, but he said the course is doing better now that the city's managed to lay out its remaining 18 holes. "There was a lot of work being done (last year)," he said.

As it is on land owned by Aéroports de Montréal (ADM), the federal government-sanctioned airport authority running the adjacent Pierre Elliot Trudeau International, much of the course was reclaimed by ADM over the last two years. From two courses and a total of 36 holes, the territory is now reduced to 18 holes.

"The terrain is in better condition than it was last year," acknowledged Pierrefonds resident Sabin Daigle, who has been frequenting the Reverchon Street-located club since 2002, as he finished up a round with a friend Friday morning. "It's too bad that it's reduced to 18 holes," he said.

Daigle said the new lay-out of the course is not too bad, but it imposes some challenges on golfers. For example, access to hole no. 10 is difficult compared to what it used to be, he said.

"They've done the best they can with the holes they have," said Gordon Black, who can be seen on the bright greens of the course about 3-4 times a year. Black said he thinks all golf courses are eventually going to run into problems, with increasing prices of gas making trips forbidding.

Rouleau picked up on this theme as well. "The participation has been less in most golf courses that we spoke to," he said. However, he attributed the drop partly to the terrible weather this year, with the excess amount of snow keeping most courses in the Montreal area from opening as early as they do during the year. "We were a bit late (to open)," he said.

As reported by The Chronicle last year, protests about the shrinking course are also due to green space encroachment. Citizen organizations such as the Green Coalition and SOS Dorval frequently butt heads with ADM over the issue, who say the land is not federally recognized as green space. This has not gone unnoticed by golf club users either.

"I feel bad that there's a loss of green space," said one man out with two friends on the golf course, right underneath the shade of the looming skeleton of a building under construction.

While Dorval's lease for the course will run up in 2013, and the airport has hinted it might need to expand even further on the territory at that time, Rouleau said he is in constant negotiations with ADM and hopes to save the last 18 holes.

The troubles between the course and the airport seemed to be far away for one group of young men making their way to hole no. 10 at about noon on Friday. "I've heard about it," said Uros Milekic, but he said the course was well laid out despite the problems.

His friend Erik Francoeur agreed. "Prices are pretty reasonable. Bang for you buck, it's a good course," he said.