

Dorval night-flight foes unbowed

SUPREME COURT ENDS CLASS ACTION

But pared-down lawsuit could take off

DAVID JOHNSTON
THE GAZETTE

A pressure group opposed to alleged illegal night flights in and out of Trudeau airport in Dorval says a Supreme Court of Canada decision this week not to hear their appeal does not spell the end of their fight.

"There are other legal and political possibilities available to us," said Luc Marion, chairperson of the Citoyens pour une qualité de vie, which has eight chapters in Montreal's west end and the West Island.

The high court said Thursday

it would not hear an appeal of the refusal by the Quebec Court of Appeal last fall to authorize a \$183-million class-action suit by the group against Aéroports de Montréal, which runs Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport on behalf of Transport Canada.

ADM official Christiane Beaulieu called the high-court ruling "a denouement that we appreciate a lot."

The Supreme Court decision means the Quebec appeals court's ruling stands.

That ruling found the group's class-action application to be

"too diffuse" in terms of the territory from which people could potentially allege loss of enjoyment of life from night flights.

But Court of Appeal Justice Louise Otis said a class-action initiative pared down to three municipalities closest to the airport — Dorval, Pointe Claire and St. Laurent — would stand a good chance of being approved.

Louis Beauregard, lawyer for the pressure group, said its board is to meet Thursday to decide whether to approve a more focused class-action application.

At issue are the operating practices by which Aéroports de Montréal has quietly allowed for an increase in night flights in and out of Trudeau airport.

According to Transport Canada regulations, flights into and out of Trudeau between 1 a.m.

and 7 a.m. are allowed only for small aircraft. Planes weighing more than 45,000 kilograms can fly between these hours only for exceptional reasons, like bad weather or emergencies.

But in April 2000, ADM started granting exemptions to Air Canada and American Airlines. In 2004, exemptions were extended to Air Transat and Skyservice — in this latter case, without the ADM's noise-abatement committee even being consulted.

The citizens group, sensing exemptions were quietly becoming standard operating practices, originally filed its class-action application in January 2002.

The ADM holds its annual general meeting on May 8.

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Group urges parents to keep kids out of new religion class

LOSS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FEARED

'Ethics' course to be mandatory in schools

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THE GAZETTE

Fearing that Quebec primary and high-school students will soon be deprived of a basic Christian education, a coalition of Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Copts is urging parents to demand their children be exempt from the province's mandatory new "ethics and religious culture" course.

The course — required of the close to one million pupils in the province's public and private schools, from Grade 1 to Grade 11, starting in September — goes against the principle of parents' freedom of choice in their children's education, the Coalition pour la liberté en Éducation says.

The group has printed a one-page "Application for Exemption of a Student" form that parents can submit to their child's school board, with instructions on how to appeal if the application is refused. The form can be downloaded from the coalition's website, www.coalition-cle.org

To keep track of the applications, the Christian coalition — which describes itself as a grassroots group of volunteers with no church or government funding — is encouraging parents to fax it copies of the completed forms as well as the responses.

At a Montreal news conference, representatives of the coalition defined themselves by denomination. The group's pres-

ident is Roman Catholic; its vice-president is Evangelical. They were flanked by the president of Greater Montreal Orthodox Coptic Community Association and a Presbyterian sociologist.

Publicizing a demonstration being organized for May 3 in Sherbrooke, coalition leaders laid out their objections to the new course, saying they'd be happier if no religious instruction were given in schools, rather than one that is bound to "confuse" students in their beliefs.

The new course is described in detail on the Quebec Education Department website, www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ecr

In the class, students will "learn about the important place of Catholicism and Protestantism in Quebec's religious heritage, discover the contributions of Judaism and native spiritualities to this religious heritage, and learn about elements of other religious traditions more recently found in Quebec society" — like Islam and Hinduism.

At present, 73 per cent of children in Quebec primary schools and 57 per cent in high schools take a class specifically in the Catholic religion; about three per cent take instruction in Protestantism. Another 10 to 20 per cent take a more general "moral education" class. About four per cent opt out entirely.

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Griffintown project's critics wary

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Last-minute efforts by the city of Montreal to force Devimco Inc. to "green up" its proposed Griffintown development don't change the fundamental nature of the project, critics said yesterday.

"The heart and soul of this project is still a commercial shopping centre built on two huge megablocks with big-box stores and boutiques, and towers above them," said Chris Gobeil, a property-owner in Griffintown and a vocal foe of the project.

"When you've got 4,000 cars coming out of there on a Saturday afternoon, you're not talking green. You're talking grey. This will be a paradise for cars."

He said he is pleased Devimco is adding \$40 million to the project for such gestures as subsidized transit passes for residents and employees, energy-saving appliances and a larger contribution to a tramway project on Peel St. But he worries the residential component of the program might never be completed, or at least not for many years.

Richard Bergeron, leader of the Projet Montréal party, said he will register his opposition to the project if it is brought to a vote at Monday's council meeting. The city's last-minute greening efforts are much too little and far too late," Bergeron said.

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No need to rush plan,
Editorial, Page B6
Better, but still no cigar,
Aubin, Page B7

SAVING THE CENOTAPH



GRAHAM HUGHES THE GAZETTE

A CAUSE TO REMEMBER Comedian Joey Elias (left), Royal Canadian Legion Branch 85/90 member Donal Smith and Branch 85/90 president Irene Tait gather at the Lachine cenotaph, which was vandalized in December. Elias headlined a gala last night at the Lachine Legion branch to raise funds for repairs.

Eastern Orthodox faithful celebrate Easter tomorrow

Montreal's Eastern Orthodox Christian community — Greeks, Ukrainians, Russians, Serbians, Armenians and Romanians — is observing Holy Week.

Marathon liturgies and candlelight processions yesterday marked Orthodox Good Friday, when the faithful believe Jesus carried a cross through the streets before he was crucified.

There are 11 major Orthodox churches in Montreal, serving about 100,000 people. The differences among them are ethnic or linguistic, not theological.

The spiritual focus today is one of quiet mourning, solemn meditation and strict fasting, recalling Jesus's entombment.

Pascha, or Easter, will be celebrated after midnight tonight.

The two Christian communities — Orthodox and Western rite — observe Easter vigils on different dates because they follow different calendars.

Orthodox churches rely on lunar cycles to fix the date for Easter. The rest of the Christian world accepts the Gregorian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

Orthodox worship culminates in a three-hour midnight service tonight, when believers celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Their faith teaches that Jesus rose from the dead three days after he was put to death.

Tonight's services mark the end of five weeks of Lenten restrictions, and are usually followed by rich meals.



Vincenzo D'Alto/The Gazette

WELCOME TO THE DAFFODIL BALL, MR. BOND

Spring's big soiree hit town on Thursday, when hundreds of guests turned out for the Daffodil Ball. The annual fundraiser at Windsor Station took on a 007 theme, and generated nearly \$2.3 million for the Canadian Cancer Society. Social Notes columnist Jennifer Campbell has all the details.

TOMORROW IN ARTS & LIFE

The Gazette

Words matter