

## Former Musqueam chief says golf course plan coming in September

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Plans to cede a popular golf course in Premier Gordon Campbell's riding to the Musqueam Indian Band will be announced in early September, a Musqueam critic of the idea told a public forum last night.

Gail Sparrow, a former Musqueam chief, suggested a Sept. 7 announcement was likely based on sources she described in an interview as "pretty good."

The prediction came during a gathering on the controversy sponsored by Langara College.

Although billed as a debate, both sides quickly agreed the government and Musqueam leaders were headed in the wrong direction.

The Liberal government is involved in talks with the Musqueam, prompted by a B.C. Appeal Court ruling that disputed a 2003 decision by the province to sell the 120-acre University Golf Club to the University of British Columbia for \$11 million.

There is an expectation the Liberals will return the course to the Musqueam – a prospect that has angered golf buffs, and others who fear the loss of the course as green space when it is inevitably developed for revenues.

All of this is playing out in the affluent Vancouver-Point Grey riding of the Premier, who has said all British Columbians have to accept changes to deal with First Nations' grievances.

Ms. Sparrow was supposed to argue for ceding the University Golf Club to the band. Marty Zlotnik, a Vancouver parks commissioner who has been a fundraiser for Premier Campbell, was to argue against it.

But both attacked the plan from different angles during remarks to an audience of about 30 people, who attended the forum at the central branch of the Vancouver Public Library.

"It's hard to have a debate when everyone is so agreeable," moderator David Berner wryly noted.

Ms. Sparrow said the 1,200-member urban band are facing economic challenges that would be better treated with the provision of alternative land that could be more briskly developed for native needs and for financial returns.

"Maybe we should be looking at another choice," said Ms. Sparrow.

"I just know one thing is this: Musqueam people need land that we can use for our housing, we need land that can bring in resources for development and revenues so we can build our people homes, we can put our people to work," she said.

“Maybe there's a parcel of land that would be better for our people.”

She said few details of the plan have been released to members of the community. “It's closed room negotiations. It's not open. It's not transparent,” she said.

Mr. Zlotnik agreed on that point.

He said the golf course, now, would generate a few million dollars in revenues over the next 26 years though the property would be worth hundreds of millions of dollars for development after 2033. The Musqueam have committed to maintaining the course as a course until 2033, but said little else about the talks.

“I don't think that is as good a deal as providing 120 acres today that could be developed today,” said Mr. Zlotnik.

“Obviously they have not looked at all the alternatives, and that's what we're suggesting they do,” said Mr. Zlotnik, who is helping develop a campaign that includes a petition with 2,000 names on it, fundraising and circulars to encourage the government to that approach.

But Premier Campbell has rejected Mr. Zlotnik's criticisms, suggesting he is misinformed.

“He's a very good friend of mine. I hope he still is,” Mr. Zlotnik told the audience.

Members of the Community Endowment Council of the University Endowment Lands, representing households in the area, last night said they have been rebuffed in their efforts to meet with the premier.

They renewed their calls to be part of the process, calling for a “mandatory public consultation process” before any deal.

“We're convinced (the deal) is being done in a backroom,” said Daniel Nocente, an elected council member.

“Our view is obviously the Musqueam deserve compensations. There may be some other ways to do that rather than give up a green space of land.”

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