

## Wildrose Government Would Try to Buy Airport from Edmonton

CBC News – October 5, 2011

A Wildrose government would try to buy Edmonton's City Centre Airport to ensure it is kept as a base for northern medevac flights, party leader Danielle Smith told a CBC editorial board Wednesday. Smith said a successful sale of the airport, immediately northwest of downtown Edmonton, would be a "double win" for the province and the city. If she became Alberta premier, Smith said she would try to restart talks with the city.

***"There's no reason we can't look at negotiating a purchase of the airport asset off of the city, which would give them additional sources of revenue to pay for other things," she said. "We know that they have a few high priorities, like arenas."***

Edmonton city council voted two years ago to start a phased closure of the airport to free up the lands for residential development. Smith said that about a year and a half before the vote, the city asked the province to buy the land for \$800 million because it needed the cash. But discussions ended after the price got down to \$80 million due to cleanup costs and environmental liability, she said.

***"I believe that part of the reason that they're doing this is that they feel so cash-strapped, and I'm sensitive to that, every municipality feels cash-strapped," Smith said. "But I don't think that you go and you dismantle a major regional asset, an asset that is going to be a gateway to the north, an asset that I think has the potential to have incredibly high value for the entire capital region just because you've got a municipality that's desperate for cash."***

### 'It's news to me:' Mandel

Mayor Stephen Mandel said the city has never talked to the province about selling the airport lands. "It's news to me," he said. "I'm not going to comment on what Ms. Smith does or doesn't do, does or doesn't say. I'm only saying, my understanding of what we've done while I've been mayor is that's not happened." *Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel said as far as he knows, the city has never spoken to the province about selling the City Centre Airport.* CBC Smith mused that a figure of \$500 million might be a good starting point for negotiations, but Mandel said selling is not an option. "No, the land's not for sale," he said. "You know this is a great vision for the city of Edmonton, redevelop that land into an important part of our infrastructure, to house people in the centre of the city and to build something that's very special, and council is committed to doing that.

"I don't think that there is any reason to continue that discussion and so, we've made our decision, we've moved on, Edmontonians moved on ... everybody in the last election moved on. Decisions have been made." But the medevac issue continues to linger. A May 2011 report by the Health Quality Council of Alberta found that moving medevac flights from City Centre Airport to the international airport south of the city would put patient safety at risk by changing hospital transport times in Edmonton from being the shortest in the country to the longest. Smith said the move is the No. 1 issue in some northern Alberta communities. "When we've done town hall meetings in High Level, in Lac la Biche, the closure of the Edmonton City Centre Airport and the

impact that it is going to have on our northern communities is a constant source of concern," she said.

The ruling Alberta Progressive Conservative government isn't likely to start negotiations with the city of Edmonton after Alison Redford is sworn in as premier. "Given that we support local decision making and financial prudence, I would say we would likely not support such an initiative," Redford's chief of staff Stephen Carter said in an email to CBC News.

Last year, Mandel publicly rebuked Smith both for calling the airport closure "rushed and undemocratic" and for signing a petition circulated by Envision Edmonton, which called on the city to hold a plebiscite on the airport's future. The petition was unsuccessful because the pro-airport group failed to collect enough valid signatures. The city recently named Vancouver firm Perkins + Will as the winner of an international competition to transform the centrally-located property into an environmentally sustainable residential neighbourhood.

## **Alberta Solicitor General says the City of Edmonton made an “Incredibly Stupid Decision” about closing the Edmonton City Centre Airport.**

September 20, 2011

The Peace River Record Gazette (division of Sun Media) reported on a town hall meeting held by Envision Edmonton. For the article, the Record Gazette contacted local MLA, Alberta Solicitor General and Chief Government Whip, Frank Oberle for comments on the proposed closure of the Edmonton City Centre Airport. The Hon. Frank Oberle commented:

***"I just find this an incredibly stupid decision on the part of Edmonton. Why would we sink another nickel into that hospital if we can't get patients to it anymore?"***

***"Edmonton is on the verge of being an international medical centre. The opportunities that await them are just phenomenal. And now they want to cut off the only access to their city centre's medical facilities. I can't believe it,"***

The Hon. Frank Oberle also commented on the environmental liabilities that the airport lands have in store for the City of Edmonton. The full article has these comments as well.

Read the complete article by clicking the link below. Edmonton local media did not cover this story and Envision supporters were encouraged to contact them to ask why.

Follow the link on the Archives Page to read the full article.

## **Envision Edmonton toured Northern Alberta towns with a series of Town Hall meetings.**

September 16, 2011

Envision Edmonton completed a tour of Northern Alberta towns hosting Town Hall meetings to discuss the Edmonton City Centre Airport. Residents were told that there is something that can be done to keep the airport available to them for business and Medevac purposes. Ambulance services are not reserved for those that live in a large metropolitan area, but air ambulance should be maintained as a first class service for smaller northern communities.

Local residents were encouraged to contact their local MLA to express to them that this is a provincial matter and that the Province of Alberta needs to get involved. The City of Edmonton does not make the decisions on health care and air transportation. Each community viewed a video presentation with a question and answer period following. Unlike, many political forums, questions were open to the floor without pre-screening and all were answered and open for discussion.

Local MLAs did receive numerous telephone calls after the meetings. Envision Edmonton received calls from the MLA offices of Hector Goudreau (Dunvegan-Peace River), Pearl Calahasen (Lesser Slave Lake) and Mel Knight (Grande Prairie-Smokey) about the number of telephone calls they were receiving. Residents were motivated to take action.

## **Envision Edmonton attends Medicine Hat Leadership Forum.**

August 18, 2011

Envision Edmonton volunteers travelled to Medicine Hat to meet with local residents concerned about the City Centre Airport. Together Envision volunteers and local residents attended the PC Leadership Forum. These volunteers wore Envision Edmonton blue T-Shirts and submitted their concerns to the leaders about the airport. The moderator did not bring forward any of the many ECCA questions that were submitted.

## **Envision Edmonton attends Fort McMurray PC Leadership Forum.**

August 11, 2011

Envision Edmonton volunteers travelled to Fort McMurray to attend the PC Leadership Forum. This being the third forum in the series, a question about the Edmonton City Centre Airport was asked to each candidate if the Province should be involved in the decision to keep the airport open. Two of the candidates, Alison Redford and Doug Griffiths both answered that the Province has an interest if the health care of Albertans is involved. Doug Horner, Rick Orman and Ted Morton said that the province should not be involved while Gary Mar avoided the question by telling residents of Fort McMurray their local hospital should be upgraded to a higher standard.

Envision volunteers handed out information pamphlets and T-Shirts once again and the candidates felt Envision Edmonton's presence in the room.

## **Envision Edmonton opened an Information Centre at the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties Meeting.**

August 5, 2011

Envision Edmonton volunteers set up an Information Centre at the Delta South in Edmonton during the AAMDC meeting with the PC Leadership Candidates. Delegates from rural Alberta attending the meeting were allowed to ask about the ECCA and to pick up information on why this is Alberta's issue and copies of the Health Quality Council of Alberta report.

## **Envision Edmonton attends Street Festival in Lac La Biche.**

July 29, 2011

Envision Edmonton volunteers travelled to Lac La Biche to engage local residents to take action in keeping the ECCA open as a link to their Capital City and Alberta's health care facilities. In attendance at this event was MLA Ray Danyluk and residents were encouraged to contact his office to ask him what he was doing to keep the ECCA open for all Albertans.

Envision volunteers handed out information pamphlets and T-Shirts to Lac La Biche residents stating that the ECCA was an issue to be decided by all Albertans. Residents endorsed the efforts of Envision Edmonton and recognized the importance to their community.

## **Envision Edmonton attends PC Leadership Forum in Grande Prairie.**

July 28, 2011

Envision Edmonton volunteers travelled to Grande Prairie to the PC Party of Alberta Leadership Forum held at Evergreen Park. Volunteers from Edmonton along with volunteers living in Grande Prairie attended the forum handing out information pamphlets on why the ECCA is an Alberta issue and attended the forum wearing the signature "*Blue*" T-Shirts.

As with the previous forum attended by Envision volunteers at Vermilion, questions about the ECCA were not chosen as one to be asked to the candidates.