

Consultation on the Future of the Olympic Park

2011



**An initiative of the Advisory Committee
on the Future of the Olympic Park**



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Lise Bissonnette
Chair of the Advisory Committee

Michel Archambault, Ph.D
Associate Professor,
UQAM School of Business Administration,
and Holder of the Transat Chair in Tourism

Vincenzo Ciampi, MBA
Vice-President,
National Communication Practice Leader
Aon Hewitt

Michel Dallaire
President, Michel Dallaire Design Industriel inc.

K
Designer, Creative Director and Producer

Réal Ménard
Borough Mayor
Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve

Matthieu Proulx
Lawyer, Sports Columnist and
Former Player with the Montréal Alouettes

Paul Saint-Jacques
Manager - Coordination of the Turcot Project
and Former President and CEO of the
Palais des congrès de Montréal

A word from Lise Bissonnette



REIMAGINING THE OLYMPIC PARK

When we hear the word “park,” it conjures up images of taking a break from our busy routine, a change of air, a change of pace, having a good time, looking around, relaxing, playing, seeing a different side of life. Parks are tremendously desirable spaces, at the same time both tame and free, visible and imagined. In general, going to the park is something everyone enjoys.

Why, then, is Montréal’s huge Olympic Park regarded as such a sad place, when it takes only a few moments spent there for the visitor to want to invent exciting new possibilities for it. It is true that the Olympic Park’s past has made it the subject of clichés and skepticism rather than inspiring hope, and is still an obstacle to public reflection on what it can become. We cannot ignore its history, but we can choose to focus on the best of its legacy to us, the things that have started to change for the better, and then decide to design a future that is built on consistency rather than random chance.

The Olympic Park belongs to all Québécois, and they are the ones who hold the key to its past and its future. Because they have paid a high price for it, it is only fair that they be invited to be part of the consultation process. We are committed to giving them every chance to make suggestions and express their ambitions, and to paying attention to what they want. We’ll be listening to what Québécois have to say.

Lise Bissonnette
Chair, Advisory Committee
on the Future of the Olympic Park

Introduction

The Olympic Park is a major urban project that has made its mark on the Montréal landscape as well as on Québec society. In spite of all the ink it has spilled and the debate it has raised during its colourful past, this unique venue is, in many ways, still not very well known and deserves to be discovered and developed

Located in the borough of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve on the edge of the borough of Rosemont-Petite-Patrie, the Olympic Park occupies a 60-hectare block south of the Botanical Garden and Maisonneuve Park, bordered by Sherbrooke Street, Viau Street, Pierre-de-Coubertin Avenue and Pie-IX Boulevard. The park's surface area is comparable to that of Parc de la Villette, the largest park in Paris, and is equivalent to five times the area of Chicago's Millennium Park.

Today, it comprises the RIO installations, consisting of the Olympic Stadium, the Sports Centre, the Montréal Tower (or Olympic Tower) and a large esplanade around the buildings, used for outdoor events. There are also facilities that have been transferred by RIO or developed by third parties, namely, the Maurice-Richard Arena, the Pierre-Charbonneau Centre, Saputo Stadium, the StarCité multiplex movie theatre and the Biodome. The Planetarium is slated to join this list in 2013.

This document contains basic information and some points of reference to guide your reflection and your participation in the consultations concerning the future of the Olympic Park.



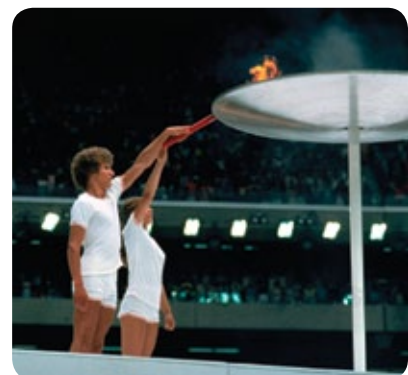


Some history...

A MAJOR MULTIPURPOSE URBAN PARK

As early as the 1930s, the area where the Olympic Park stands today was intended to be used for sports. Camilien Houde, the mayor at the time, wanted to use it to host the Empire Games. Unfortunately, World War II put an end to that project. In 1959, the Maurice-Richard Arena, owned by the City of Montréal, was built on the site. The following year, the Pierre-Charbonneau police training centre was also built.

It was the natural spot to build the Olympic installations when the International Olympic Committee announced on May 12, 1970 that the Games of the XXI Olympiad would be held in Montréal in 1976. Mayor Jean Drapeau chose the French architect Roger Taillibert to design the Olympic installations. The model of the Stadium was unveiled in April 1972 and the excavation work began on April 28, 1973.



A workers' strike delayed construction to the point that the Régie des installations olympiques (RIO), a government corporation, was formed in November 1975 to take over from the City of Montréal as project manager. The installations were completed on time for the Games, except for the Tower, whose main purpose was to hold up the roof. The difficulties surrounding the building of the installations and the estimated \$1.2 billion cost remain firmly fixed in the memory of many Québécois.

The opening ceremonies of the Games took place on schedule on July 15, 1976, before a crowd of 76,433 spectators. During the following two weeks, Montréal hosted athletes from 94 delegations who took part in the competitions for their respective sports. The Montréal Games are remembered especially for the exploits of the young Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci and the boycotting by African countries.

The Games' spin-offs in a number of sectors of activity were immediate. These included the building of sports facilities for the entire City of Montréal, an increase in the number of tourists as a result of Montréal's positioning as an international city, and the creation of a large number of sporting federations.

After the Games, RIO was given the mandate of managing and operating the Olympic Park. The Stadium then became a multipurpose facility. The Montréal Expos baseball team moved there in 1977 and played all its home games there until the team left in 2004. The Montréal Alouettes football team also played at the Stadium from 1977 to 1997, and after that played the Eastern final and Grey Cup games there. The Stadium also hosts other sports events, as well as trade shows, exhibitions, concerts and large-scale gatherings.

The government corporation completed the construction of the Tower and its funicular in 1987. The Olympic Village, built to accommodate the Olympic athletes, was turned into rental apartments in 1979, and then sold to the private sector in 1998. The Velodrome was turned into the Biodome by RIO and transferred to the City of Montréal in 1992, on the occasion of the city's 350th anniversary. In 1999, the weight of snow caused a tear in the Stadium's roof. Since then, winter activities have not been held at the Stadium.



Roland Lorente ©

A DARING STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE

The International Olympic Committee wanted the events to take place in an open-air stadium. The City of Montréal, for its part, wanted the sports facilities to be used year-round after the Summer Games, especially for baseball, and for other sports and cultural events. These needs prompted the decision to cover the Stadium with a retractable roof.

The architectural approach taken by the architect Taillibert in designing the Olympic installations had to meet a large number of requirements. He was asked to use the same site for several sports in order to reduce travel and create a unified architectural complex. Special attention also had to be paid to the flow of crowd traffic and to ensure the safe evacuation of people from the site.

Roger Taillibert proposed three main components in which most of the competitions would be held: the Stadium, the Swim Centre and the Velodrome. He designed unusual, organic shapes, erected using innovative building technologies.

The Stadium's elliptical shape was adopted because it gave all spectators an excellent view; the space had no columns and a ceiling clearance of almost 50 metres. An inclined tower overlooking the installations was designed to support the retractable roof, which was made of Kevlar. The construction of the Velodrome, covered by a self-supporting vault, was also considered to be a technical exploit. The installations were linked by a vast concrete esplanade decorated with water features, built over top of some 4,000 indoor parking spaces.

On account of their architectural style, unique in North America, the Olympic Park and its Stadium are a heritage monument, a Montréal landmark and a symbol for the city. They are now part of the built heritage not only of the city of Montréal, but also of Québec and Canada.



SPORTS FACILITIES

1 - OLYMPIC STADIUM (RIO installation)

With its 56,000 permanent seats, the Olympic Stadium is the biggest sports facility in Montréal, and rivals large stadiums in most major European and North American cities. The different rooms available can be rented to hold large-scale commercial, cultural and sports events.

The Stadium is closed to the public from December 1 to March 31 because of the state of its roof, which constitutes a major handicap to its use and significantly reduces its occupancy rate, which has been an average of 144 days per year since 2006, compared to an average of 219 days between 1988 and 1998. The seasonal use of the Olympic Stadium also limits the variety of shows and events that can be organized there. Many of the shows and exhibitions that used to be held there have migrated to the Palais des congrès, thereby reducing the Stadium's occupancy rate and its operating revenue.

2 - SPORTS CENTRE (RIO installation)

Located at the foot of the Tower, the Sports Centre is the biggest aquatic centre in Québec. It features seven basins, including two 50-metre swimming pools, and stands holding some 2,800 seats. The Centre

can, therefore, host numerous local, national and international competitions. It also boasts the only indoor scuba diving pool in North America and the only three-metre-deep synchronized swimming pool in Canada that meets the standards of this discipline.

A \$3.8 million investment was made in 2007 to upgrade the facilities and position the Sports Centre for use in elite sports. Used as a training facility for Canada's national swim, diving, synchronized swimming and women's water polo teams, the Sports Centre is also used on a daily basis by Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough residents, and Montréal schools and day camps. In 2010, the Sports Centre welcomed more than 300,000 people.

3 - SAPUTO STADIUM

This stadium, with seating for just over 12,000, is currently the home of the Montréal Impact semi-professional soccer club, which plays some 15 games there during its regular season. Owned by the Saputo Group, the stadium was built in 2007-2008 on land belonging to RIO, pursuant to a 40-year emphyteutic lease. With the Impact joining MLS (Major League Soccer), an expansion the stadium to add 10,000 seats will begin shortly.



4 - MAURICE-RICHARD ARENA

In spite of its limited seating capacity of less than 4,500 in the stands, the Maurice-Richard Arena has the only ice in Québec that can host official international hockey or speed skating competitions. Since 1994, this arena has been the training site for Canada's national short-track speed skating team.

CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND TOURIST FACILITIES

5 - MONTRÉAL TOWER (RIO installation)

The highest inclined tower in the world, the Montréal Tower has an observatory, reached by a funicular, that boasts a panoramic view of the city that is popular with tourists from Québec and abroad. The Tower can also be used for small conferences and receptions, either in the two reception rooms at the top or in the auditorium at the bottom of the Tower. The Montréal Tower welcomes 250,000 visitors every year, 9% of whom are Montrealers. The Tower also has spaces that can be set up and used for a variety of purposes.

6 - BIODÔME

Built in 1992 for the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montréal, the Biodôme is located in the former Velodrome. Owned by the City of Montréal, this original and multiple award-winning museum recreates the ecosystems of the Americas. With close to 900,000 visitors annually, 41% of whom are foreign tourists, it constitutes a major tourist attraction.

7 - PIERRE-CHARBONNEAU CENTRE

This multi-disciplinary complex is jointly managed by the City of Montréal and the Association du Centre Pierre-Charbonneau. Since it opened its doors in 1960, it has been offering Montrealers a wide variety of recreational, cultural and sporting activities, in addition to being a venue for various events, such as conferences, symposiums, shows, galas, and provincial, national and international sports championships.

8 - CINÉMA STARCITÉ

In 2000, RIO transferred a portion of its land to Cineplex Entertainment LP via an emphyteutic lease, which resulted in the construction of the StarCité multiplex, with a total of 4,000 seats in its 17 theatres. The company has indicated its intention to exercise its purchase rights at the end of the lease.

9 - RIO TINTO ALCAN PLANETARIUM

The Planetarium is slated to open its doors on the Olympic Park site in 2013, when it will join the other nearby facilities—the Botanical Garden, Insectarium and Biodôme—to form the Space for Life. The arrival of the Planetarium will enhance this cluster of facilities dedicated to science, education and recreation.



SURROUNDING AREA

The area immediately around the Olympic Park is largely residential. While the areas near Maisonneuve Park and the Botanical Garden contain relatively well-off residents, those located to the south and west have a higher concentration of low-income households.

The two adjoining boroughs, Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and Rosemont-Petite-Patrie (approximately 130,000 residents each), are working-class neighbourhoods that have been on the decline since the 1950s due to the departure of a number of industries. In the past few years, however, major socio-demographic changes have been observed in these areas that have led to a decrease in the number of families with children, an increase in household income, and an increase in rents and property values.

Concentrations of businesses and services are located more than a kilometre away from the Olympic Park compound, on Ontario, Sainte-Catherine, Masson and Sherbrooke streets. The lack of services inside or in the immediate vicinity of the Park is a hindrance to the development of its recreational and tourist potential.

Lastly, public transportation services to this area, which include two Métro stations and several bus routes, make the facilities very accessible.

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CURRENT ISSUES

The RIO installations are now 35 years old. While a team of engineers and specialists is keeping a close eye on them to make sure they are safe, they have nonetheless aged and are in need of modernization, which will require investment.

The seasonal use of the Stadium, which limits its operating potential, is a major issue. It has become necessary to replace the roof so that the Stadium can compete with similar large facilities in other major North American cities for large-scale national and international events.

Over the years, RIO has transferred certain buildings or land so that they can take on new functions. All of the initiatives to date have been carried out with no real plan or overall vision that would maximize the potential and the qualities of the site.

These are just some of the issues that need to be pondered. The challenge is to breathe new life into the RIO installations and the Olympic Park so that, in the manner of other Olympic installations and large urban parks around the world (see pages 11 and 12), they can meet the aspirations of the community and generate spin-offs in line with their potential.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF THE OLYMPIC PARK

Before making a decision on the matter of replacing the roof, RIO has decided to initiate an open and comprehensive reflection on the future of its installations, their optimal use as well as the Olympic Park as a whole. RIO's Board of Directors has therefore formed an advisory committee on the future of the Olympic Park to help the Board assess the real needs of existing and potential clienteles. The specific mandate of this committee is to advise RIO in the following areas:

- > its vision for developing the Olympic Park and for establishing strategic orientations for its business plan
 - > the future priority uses for the facilities, including the Stadium itself, in order to be able to make appropriate investment choices
 - > the type of roof to be used for the Stadium, which will have to meet needs related to the Stadium's future priority uses
- Demolishing the RIO installations or repurposing buildings that have been leased are not options being considered by the Committee.



PUBLIC CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

In the fall of 2011, the Advisory Committee will hold a series of public consultation activities:

- > Theme discussion groups with representatives from the organizations concerned, at which the organizations will be able to express their expectations regarding the development of the Olympic Park. Such meetings will also be held outside Montréal in order to obtain input from other regions.
- > Free tours of the facilities, open to the public, will give citizens an opportunity to get to know the site and to respond to the challenges posed by its future.
- > Citizens will be able to give their opinions, debate the issues and generate ideas on the future of the Olympic Park, at an online discussion forum (www.avenirparcolympique.ca).

The Advisory Committee will consider the results of these consultations as it prepares to present its general orientations to RIO in December 2011. The study of these orientations will continue on into 2012, and the Advisory Committee will then make its conclusions known at the end of that year.

A few Olympic and urban parks around the world



Adam J.W.C ©

MUNICH OLYMPIC PARK

www.olympiapark.de

The Munich Olympic Park is located in the north end of the Bavarian capital and was built for the 1972 Summer Olympic Games. This 300-hectare site, managed by the Municipality of Munich, had 3.9 million visitors in 2010, 2.2 million of whom had come to participate in a total of 354 events. The park offers a variety of hospitality structures (13 sports and cultural facilities and six main outdoor facilities) and an array of events all year long, for local, national and international clientele.



www.photosparis.fr

PARC DE LA VILLETTE

www.villette.com

Until 1974, the Parc de la Villette site was home to the Villette slaughterhouse. The renovation and conversion project began in 1980 and went on for 20 years, resulting in the largest urban park in Paris. The park includes several museums, concert halls, music schools and other recreational facilities, making it a major cultural centre that attracted more than 4 million visitors in 2009.



Adam J.W.C. ©

SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK

www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au

This Olympic park was built for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, and is located 16 km from the downtown area. With 9.5 million visitors in 2010, this large, 640-hectare urban park has become one of the most popular tourist spots in Sydney. What makes this park so attractive is the diversity of its sports, cultural, hotel and restaurant facilities, as well as the six large and well-designed green spaces. ANZ Stadium managers had to reduce the capacity of the stadium (100,000 seats) in order to facilitate operations.



J. Crocker ©

CHICAGO'S MILLENNIUM PARK

www.millenniumpark.org

Millennium Park is another example of the conversion of an urban wasteland into a large park. Located downtown, with a surface area of 24.5 acres, the park is financed by the City of Chicago and several local industrial companies. The site includes an outdoor stage that can accommodate 11,000, a theatre, pavilions to welcome tourists, a skating rink and art exhibition spaces. The park hosts 525 events per year, and has the highest visitor rate per acre in the U.S.

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Montréal Impact – Saputo Stadium
Olympic Park
Patrick Beaudry

**Your participation is important.
Please give us your opinion.**

www.avenirparcolympique.ca

**The Advisory Committee
on the Future of the Olympic Park
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**Olympic Park
4141, avenue Pierre-De-Coubertin
Montréal (Québec) H1V 3N7**

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