

Omnium Banque Nationale

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Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Pierre Fitzgibbon

Minister of Economy, Innovation, and Energy

Valerie Tetreault

Tournament Director

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Mr. Pierre Fitzgibbon, Minister of Economy, Innovation, and Energy, responsible for the metropolis and the region of Montreal, and Valerie Tetreault, Vice President of Communications and Tournaments, a professional at Tennis Canada and Director of the Omnium Banque Nationale Tournament. You have the floor.

MINISTER PIERRE FITZGIBBON: Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Valerie. I'm very happy to be with you today. Clearly when we walk around the site, we can see how people from Quebec just love tennis. This love is so strong, and it is increasing in time.

We can see in the last stretch of this tournament that in spite of a Canadian not being in the final stages and in spite of the rain, everybody loves it. So Montreal is the city of sports by excellence.

This tournament has become a signature event for the metropolis. This event is part of the most important events for our teams. We know that there's a lot of economic and touristic positive consequences, and many people come to visit us thanks to that. I have the pleasure today to announce an investment of almost \$3 billion dedicated exclusively to the world of tennis.

We are talking about \$900,000 coming from the Metropolis Signature Fund for expanding the tournament, and this will start in 2025. Tennis Canada announced earlier this year this expansion, and I am proud that the government is able to participate in this project.

This fund helps to finance projects that are good for the reputation of Montreal. As a Minister responsible for the metropolis, I totally believe in Omnium Banque Nationale. If we talk about expansion, it means more athletes, more matches, more spectators, and greater media coverage.

This wouldn't be possible without modern and updated



structures, and this is the reason why, in parallel with the expansion of the tournament, Tennis Canada will also renovate all of the facilities in the stadium and adapt them to the new standards.

This will be possible thanks to an investment of \$2 million coming from the Minister of Sports, Isabelle Charest, in support of sports programs.

She can't be here, of course. I'm sure you understand why. She's in Paris, of course, for a reason. The works will include the construction of new courts and sports platforms, like hitting walls, et cetera.

I know you expect a roof, but these amounts are not for the roof. I can imagine some might be disappointed, but I can tell you that we remain open in the future for this type of project, but the works we are talking about today are needed immediately.

We need to give an access to quality facilities. We are talking about modern facilities. Then everybody will make a habit of using them. It's good news for the metropolis and for tennis.

I'm now giving the floor to Valerie, the Director of Omnium Banque Nationale.

VALERIE TETREAUULT: Thank you. Precisely, I would like to thank our Minister, Mr. Fitzgibbon and Mrs. Minister Charest, who can't be here today, and also the government of Quebec for this very valuable support.

First, let me talk about the \$2 million that we will receive through this program you mentioned. It's an important aid, and thanks to this support we will be able to raise the standard all our facilities so we can have recreational activity in this stadium for all the people living in Montreal.

When the tournament ends, it is the real job that is starting for us. The mission of Tennis Canada and the mission of the tournament, too, is to develop tennis as a sport. Thanks to the surplus generated by Omnium Banque Nationale presented by Rogers, we are able to train new champions, new coaches, new officials, and we are able to set up many programs in order to make tennis more accessible in many ways.



The IGA Stadium hosts the great event that our tournament is presented by Rogers, but it is also the biggest tennis center for the public that exists in our country. It offers courts at very reasonable rates that you can't find anywhere else. It is also a national training center.

The best talents between 14 to 18 years old all come to Montreal. This is how we can have athletes from Ontario, British Columbia who come here, learn French, and call Montreal as their second city of adoption, so we can feel the increased popularity of tennis.

We can see that this week that the interest is high, and also, people want to participate. We can see here that demand is higher than the offer of courts that we are offering, so it is very important for us to maintain the level of our facilities, and this is why this program is going to allow us to do this.

We will renovate the courts from No. 2 to No. 4, and I also want to talk about the \$900,000 because we are going to go through a very important transition period. As we announced last June, we will have a bigger draw. Our tournament is going to become bigger. We are going to play over more days. This will be a unique opportunity for Montreal and Quebec to welcome more athletes, but also more tourists in Montreal.

We will be able to be better known in more than 175 countries in the world because we will stage the tournament over more days. So the positioning of Montreal will be reinforced as a sports city.

So what we wanted is a vote of confidence from the ATP and the WTA, and we got it. This is because of the reputation and popularity of our tournament that we built over the years thanks to very precious partners and also thanks to the amateurs. They are very faithful, loyal, and more numerous.

So our tournament is now one of the most sought after tournaments. I can see that listening to the comments I get from the tour, from the players, and in the world of tennis this is noticed. This is our signature. This means our future is bright.

However, it is one thing to have a higher elite tournament, but it means we have higher standards to comply with. We need to guarantee that we will be up to par with those new standards.

So that support we are getting will help us to improve some facilities in the key areas of our tournament because we

need to give always better experience to everyone, to the athletes, to the spectators, and also you, the media, that we are not forgetting, of course.

I hear a lot of talking about a roof, but the present program we are talking about is a first step so that we can really set the basis and consolidate the place of Montreal as one of the major tennis cities in the world for a long term future, 30 years at least.

Once again, I would like to thank our Minister Mr. Fitzgibbon and the government of Quebec for the support they are announcing today, but also, because they are very open minded. They showed that all along our discussions, and we will be able to discuss future projects with them. Of course, we have as a goal in Tennis Canada to file a new project in the following year.

Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We will take questions, please.

Q. Good morning. Mr. Fitzgibbon, you say that money will not be for the roof, but do you believe it will help to finally arrive to having a roof?

MINISTER PIERRE FITZGIBBON: For the time being, as we are talking, we didn't have an official request for a roof at the government of Quebec, but as it was said, we are open to this. We know what the priorities are for Tennis Canada right now, for Montreal, but we are open, and we know that in time we will receive a formal request for what is important.

VALERIE TETREAU: Well, the works we are going to do are just a first step, so that in the future we might add a roof on Center Court. As the Minister said, it is necessary to follow the priorities one by one.

First, we want to do works that can, of course, be useful to the Omnium tournament, but also for the practice of tennis all year round here in the stadium. So we have to go step by step. It is true we haven't filed a precise project for the roof yet, but our intention is to do that. Our goal is to do that during the coming year.

But before that, we know that our stadium is aging, almost 30 years now. The southern part of the stadium is even older, even before I was born, which at that time when we had a baseball stadium.

So before we talk about a roof we first have to take stock of what we have in order to be able to design the good plans. So we still need for the time being to carry out studies before filing a request for a roof.

...quand tout est dit, nous avons terminé.

Q. Valerie, a question for you: With what happened Friday and the pouring rain, do you have more and more pressure from the ATP to have this famous roof?

VALERIE TETREAULT: This question comes up more and more. It's the men's tournament this year, but the name we hear all the time is Debby. Yes, of course, we think about it more and more, and people ask the question more and more. The players ask also, and we are watching what other tournaments are doing.

Madrid has a roof. The four Grand Slams have a roof. Rome announced a roof for '25/'26. It's not everywhere. It is not mandatory. Indian Wells maybe has less rain than we have here, but there is a trend notably because of climate change. Since I've been director of this tournament, I can tell you the trend is not good.

So it is not a required standard by ATP, but it is true that we are asked the question more and more. International TV also is mentioning it. Of course, we are for the time being not able to guarantee a match at a given time, and it is difficult for everyone.

Sometimes because of the rain we are missing opportunities to attract tourists. When people buy tickets, they need to be sure they will be able to watch a match. So this is good for the city that is seen on TV during the tournament in the whole world.

Q. A question to the Minister: When the request will come on your table at the government about the roof, what are the important criteria the government will use to approve maybe the project?

MINISTER PIERRE FITZGIBBON: Well, I am talking on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Tourism. We know it is important to have a very good tournament here, and it is important also for the youth who are attracted to tennis. We also know it's important economically.

So we are going to consider the request because we want Montreal to be a sports city. We are one of the nine Masters 1000 tournament cities, but of course, there are constraints. We have many priorities in the government. Many infrastructures are failing in Quebec, but the economic consequences will be an important factor, and we are proud also of Montreal as a metropolis. So the sports aspect is important for us, too.

Q. A question to both of you: You are talking of the passion that this tournament is generating in the region and that the demand goes beyond the offer. So about the roof, it's not only the roof, but we need

courts that are accessible and usable even in the middle of the winter. So do you believe the government will make sure courts are available more and more in Quebec everywhere, whatever the season, because for the time being the offer is not very large.

MINISTER PIERRE FITZGIBBON: I'm talking on behalf of Isabelle Charest, my colleague. The program is to renovate the infrastructures and create new ones. So the request she had this year was up to \$3 billion.

One consideration that the government will have is to be able to provide infrastructures for the youth. We know the top players have an impact on the young players, but we need to have accessible facilities for the young players.

Of course, economically we need to see what the impact will be. Of course, if the tournament is longer, also it will increase the economic results. Of course, we have to be very strict about the budget.

VALERIE TETREAULT: For Tennis Canada it is a priority to offer accessibility and to increase participation in tennis. We have to make sure that we have more courts, more covered courts, so that people can play tennis all year round.

It's been a few years now that we have had a great adventure with our friends at Rogers with a program that is helping municipalities to offer various options. For example, putting a bubble over an existing court. This idea has been very successful, and many municipalities can do it to offer the possibility of playing tennis all year round.

Q. It's been two years that the players have to play two matches a day during the tournament. You said Montreal had a good reputation, but this reputation could be affected if there's no roof. Do you believe the reputation of Montreal could be challenged if there's no roof?

VALERIE TETREAULT: When the players are confronted with the fact of having to play two matches a day, it is not ideal, and it can affect their experience coming to Montreal and the memories they keep from the tournament.

We heard that already last year with Samsonova, who had to play the semifinal and the final on the same day, but something really I heard in the comments those past days is that the players are totally aware we do not control the weather. They know it is a possibility that they might have to play two matches a day.

Of course, we are trying to make sure everything is totally fair for every player, so that means when one player has to



...quand tout est dit, nous avons terminé.

play a second match during the day, we make sure it's the same for his opponent.

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But as of 2025, the expansion of our tournament will help us, and this is one of the goals because the players will have one day off in between each match up to the semifinal. So it gives us more leeway with the schedule because if it rains, the player will only have to play one match a day consecutively, but he will not have to play two matches in the same day.

Q. About the works you're going to do on the court, you talked about Courts No. 2, 3, and 4. What are you going to do? Will there be changes on the Rogers Court too?

VALERIE TETREAULT: It's all about the surface. We renovated Courts 5 to 11 in the past years. Courts 2 to 4 are those close to the Rogers Court. We noticed this year especially that the time had come to resurface those courts. It is high time, and we are going to do that before the next tournament.

Q. So you mean the renovation will be finished for the next tournament?

VALERIE TETREAULT: Well, the whole program is over several years, but the priority is to renovate Courts No. 2 to 4, and we hope to finish that particular work before the next tournament, but there are other aspects that will happen in the following years. We are going to build hitting walls. Same thing for the locker rooms.

THE MODERATOR: Last question, please.

Q. Question to Valerie: Talking about the courts, earlier this week you were talking about practice courts that you needed to add. Is this going to be paid for with this money, or is it for later?

VALERIE TETREAULT: No, it is not part of that envelope or these two envelopes. It will be part of the budget of what it costs to organize a tournament like the Omnium Banque Nationale. When I was talking about long term plans, these plans will be over 30 years.

In the 30 year plan this aspect will be a priority. With the new status of our tournament, as I said, we will have higher standards to comply with. To comply with the ATP requirements we lack two practice courts. We asked for an exemption from the ATP. They accepted for '25 and '26, but the condition is to find a satellite site to provide enough practice courts to the players.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.



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