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Expo 67: More than just nostalgia

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Forty short years ago, on April 27, 1967, the Universal and International Exhibition Montreal 1967 was officially launched, throwing open the doors to an unforgettable summer. For those who experienced it first hand, Expo 67 remains a vital milestone in the history of Montreal – a time when our metropolis believed in itself and in its future as never before.

Expo 67 did far more than generate sizeable investments. It left us with infrastructures that, almost half a century later, are still vital to the life of Montreal and contribute to its development and quality of life. It also left the world with an image of Montreal that it continues to project today: that of a modern, dynamic, open, and welcoming city.

Let us be clear about this: when a large-scale project is launched in any city, with a real commitment to sustainable development – integrating social concerns, respecting the environment, and taking into account the requirements of economic viability – it can unleash a strong movement, an irresistible groundswell of support. People come together, forget their differences, and work together to rise to the challenge of a major accomplishment. Far-reaching projects undertaken from this perspective have an extraordinary psychological impact, generating unheard of confidence in our collective abilities. They inspire enthusiasm, a taste for action, and a fierce determination to excel.

Here, today, in Montreal, there is such a project – realistic and inspiring – that carries with it all the promise of a city built in our image: an urban environment engaged in a new phase of its growth and the realization of its potential – that makes the most of its strengths and is fully committed to the philosophy of sustainable development.

In fact the development plan for the Montreal harbourfront, better known as Vision 2025, has already arrived at a decisive stage, where action will soon be taken. The Société du Havre de Montréal and its partners are working tirelessly with all of those who have a firm belief in the future of Montreal.

Expo 67 thus represents far more than just nostalgia for an extraordinary period in our history. It is the inspiration that reminds us that, today, anything is possible, just as it was forty years ago, if we take the development of our city enthusiastically in hand and recreate an atmosphere of real achievement!

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Expo 67: A far-reaching project that enriched Montreal

Expo 67 was an extraordinary development vector that not only earned Quebec international recognition for a highly ambitious engineering project, but also generated other projects that enriched Montreal and its community and transformed it into a modern metropolis.

“Expo 67 was a turning point not only for infrastructures, but also for the mentality of Quebecers. We developed a new vision of ourselves. We realized that we were capable of accomplishing great things when we worked together,” says Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien, who served as director of operations for Expo 67.

A permanent heritage

Of course, the holding of this event required preparations on a massive scale.

First of all, to host Expo 67 in a unique location, it was necessary to create islands along the St. Lawrence Seaway. This required 28 million metric tons of landfill – three times the weight of the largest pyramid in Egypt – and tons of earth excavated for the metro system were dumped into the river.

Among the infrastructure projects that had to be accelerated for Expo 67 were the three major urban expressways – Décarie, Ville-Marie, and Bonaventure – as well as the Louis-Hippolyte-La Fontaine bridge-tunnel.

While the metro system as we know it today was begun in 1961, it took the coming of the World's Fair to accelerate its construction – particularly the line linking Montreal to the south shore. With a stop on Île Sainte-Hélène, it became the primary means of accessing the site.

Numerous other projects were also launched for Expo 67, including La Ronde, which continues to thrill children each summer, and, of course, Habitat 67, a housing complex built with modular interlocking concrete forms, which was used to house guests at Expo 67 and later purchased by its tenants.

"What strikes me about Expo 67 is that it changed Montreal forever," says de Gaspé Beaubien. "We took our place on the international stage and measured ourselves against other countries. Before, there were doubts, but when we pulled off Expo 67, Montrealers were very proud."

A contribution to our cultural heritage

In addition to improving public transit and other infrastructures, Montreal's metro system also made a significant contribution to our cultural heritage thanks to the unique architecture of its various stations. They are home to major works by recognized artists, making this one of the largest underground art galleries in the world.

Among other highlights, we should mention the magnificent stained-glass window by Marcelle Ferron at the Champ-de-Mars station, the colourful circles by Jean-Paul Mousseau at the Peel station, and Hector Guimard's art-nouveau entrance portico at the Square-Victoria metro station.

Expo 67 also gave Montrealers an opportunity to learn about world cultures in all spheres of artistic activity and to forge strong ties with them, as shown, for example, by the Festival International de Jazz and the FrancoFolies de Montréal.

The harbourfront: Another promising project

All this brings to mind another project that appears to be equally promising: Vision 2025 – the harbourfront development plan – which aims to reclaim a 22-kilometer strip of shoreline to promote economic activity and create urban habitats that will "bring the city back to its river."

The project includes five major initiatives: the redevelopment of the Bonaventure Expressway; the development of brownfield sites, the creation of blue and green spaces, the building of a modern 7-kilometer tramway between the Casino and the Quai de l'Horloge, following the route of the former Expo-Express, and the creation of new tourism and cultural activities.

As noted by Lucien Bouchard last year, when he served as co-chair of the Société du Havre, "What are 460-odd million dollars for three government levels when you're talking about developing the economies of Montreal, Quebec, and Canada over ten years? It's extremely little."

Isabelle Hudon, the current chair of the Société du Havre and president and CEO of the Board of Trade, adds that, "A project like this is a true development lever for Montreal and will give it the impetus needed to revitalize the entire sector. Moreover, the consensus surrounding this strategic project is one of the strongest Montreal has seen in many years."

In the wake of Habitat 67 Montreal architecture and the world

Among the many legacies of Expo 67 to Montreal's urban landscape, Habitat 67 holds a special place. Very few Montreal housing complexes have touched the collective imagination as has this structure of concrete modular blocks arranged on twelve floors to form 158 housing units of 15 different types.

Boldness and excellence

Thought by many at the time to be a modern utopia, the work of Moshe Safdie remains, forty years later, a unique and timeless symbol of a period of boldness and imagination.

"Like many structures built on the Expo site, Habitat 67 opened new horizons," affirms Viateur Michaud, of [Lemay Michaud Architecture Design](#), a firm with offices in Montreal and Quebec City that designed both the Hôtel Le Germain and the Complexe Desjardins shopping mall in Montreal as well as many other

projects in Canada and around the world.

"Before, there was not much innovation, and all Quebec architecture looked pretty much alike," continues Michaud. "Expo 67 put us in touch with perspectives from around the world and encouraged boldness and imagination. There was a sense of wanting to surpass oneself."

Montreal architects: In demand outside Quebec

While it is difficult to find urban structures in Montreal directly inspired by Expo, Michaud believes that the innovation developed there has had a long-term impact. "It was a trigger," he explains. "It changed our way of thinking. And while that influence can't necessarily be seen in the architecture itself, it is very apparent in the importance of design to development plans."

While it would no doubt be presumptuous to attribute this directly to the achievements of Expo 67, it is nevertheless true that Montreal architects are often in great demand outside Quebec. According to Michaud, there are many reasons for this. "They are creative, and they are good at finding solutions. They are also open-minded and receptive, sensitive to the needs of their clients and their habits and customs, and they are very down to earth."

Michaud believes that successes such as those of Cirque du Soleil and other Quebec artists outside the province show that creativity is a dominant characteristic in Montreal. "And, more than ever, in the context of globalization, the greatest asset is creativity – the ability to be different and to stand apart from the crowd. And it's at the level of design that that is felt."

Urban development mission

Architecture and civic design will continue to be burning issues in the coming years, especially given that, according to the United Nations, by 2030 the size of urban populations will increase by 50%.

From May 30 to June 1, the World Trade Centre Montréal, the team of international trade experts of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, will lead a dozen Quebec entrepreneurs on a [trade mission to Washington, D.C.](#), to visit the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. Participants in this mission will have a chance to meet with urban development experts as well as the managers of those multilateral development banks to learn how to gain access to markets where they fund projects.

The global phenomenon of migration to urban centres is creating an urgent need – especially in emerging countries – to develop management programs, tools, and infrastructures to meet the growing demand. This situation creates an annual market worth several billion dollars and many Quebec companies have the skills needed to take advantage of these business opportunities.

>> > Business information

Expos, shows, and trade fairs: Profitable ways to make yourself known

To investigate new business opportunities around the world, companies may choose to participate in fairs geared to the general public, such as the international exposition to be held in Shanghai in 2010, or in smaller, more targeted, trade shows.

But, in either case, if they are to achieve the best possible return on their investment, they must know how to prepare. A successful exhibit doesn't just happen, say the experts.

Expo 2010

The theme of Expo 2010, to be held in Shanghai, China, will be "Better City – Better Life." It will focus on the importance of urban development and is expected to attract participants from 170 countries from May 1 to October 31, 2010.

According to the International Expositions branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada's participation in international expositions provides numerous opportunities in foreign trade. It has spurred the growth of strong industries in areas such as audio-visual/multimedia, exhibits, and film. Canada's participation has also contributed to the development and marketing of expertise in expo-related industries. Canadian designers, architects, and engineers often use their contribution to Canada pavilions as a means to promote their services to other international participants at upcoming expos.

Benefiting from trade fairs

The trade fair market is constantly changing, and widespread Internet use has caused consumers to be better informed, more demanding, and less loyal.

"You've got to adapt, but one important thing – the human factor – hasn't changed; in fact, 88% of a show's success depends directly on the people operating the booth," claims Julien Roy, of [Face to Face Marketing](#), a specialist in shows and exhibitions, who has spent fifteen years working with more than

3,000 companies in North America and Europe.

"Shows are one of the most profitable and yet most under-estimated sales tools. But to make the most of them, you've got to do some planning and carefully prepare your team," he adds.

"Companies are never fully prepared: an exposition requires much more than just handing out brochures. The distribution of materials is a science in itself."

Roy suggests that, to gain experience, it's possible to reduce costs by joining a trade mission: participate in a Canada pavilion, for example.

You can also take advantage of the grants and expertise available from government organizations such as Canada Economic Development, Industry Canada, and municipal development agencies.

But the first step is to carefully select the event based on their real potential audience as opposed to their total attendance.

Roy believes that a smaller show is often more cost effective than a major exposition, where the target clientele is diluted by crowds.

Recently, a restaurant equipment supplier was thinking of participating in a major U.S. show with 200,000 visitors. Instead, it chose a smaller show with 15,000 visitors.

"That was a smart decision because the majority of the visitors, who were familiar with their products, were their real potential audience. So it was more profitable, and less time was wasted."

The importance of the human factor

The human factor is critical to the success of any trade show.

Roy cites some telling statistics on this subject:

- About 88% of a show's success is directly related to the people running the booth.
- The rate of transformation of casual visitors into potential clients jumps by 68% for those relying on trained personnel.
- The average effectiveness rate of employees running exhibition booths in North America is 19%.

"The most striking fact," he says, "is that over the past five years, companies that planned their exhibition strategy and built a well-trained team increased their results by 290% - while cutting costs by 18%."

It has also been observed that while show attendance has fallen over the past five years, the number of decision-makers has increased. So more buying decisions are made on the spot.

"A show requires a completely different type of service than daily sales. You must invest the time and energy needed to build a seasoned team," concludes Roy.

Made-to-measure training

Twice a year, the World Trade Centre Montréal – the team of international trade experts of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal – offers a training workshop presenting the keys to a successful and profitable show: planning, the design and placement of the kiosk, techniques for attracting visitors, and selling products and services quickly. The next training session – "[Trade fairs: maximize the return on your investment](#)" – will be held on June 5.

Info entrepreneurs

To learn more about all the programs and services offered to companies by each government level, consult the [Info entrepreneurs service](#) – a member of the Canada Business Network - offered at the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal. A leader in providing integrated business information, Info entrepreneurs helps Quebec SMEs realize their full potential in terms of innovation, productivity, and competitiveness.

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Choosing public transit

It is in the largest cities that the choice of public transit as a priority mode of transportation is most obvious.

An efficient system improves the mobility of workers, students, tourists and shoppers; reduces traffic congestion (damages are estimated to cost Montreal almost \$1 billion annually); and improves the quality of both life and place.

Public transport has always played an important role in the Montreal landscape - from the days of the horse-drawn wagon to today's lowered-floor buses and renovated metro cars. In fact Montreal is one of the North American metropolises that make the greatest use of public transit, which currently boasts a market share of about 22%.

Montreal's leading position in terms of public transit is due largely to its metro system and the some 1.3 million people who use it each day. Now composed of 65 stations – soon to jump to 68 with the inauguration of the Laval stations – Montreal's metro system is a direct legacy of the 1967 World's Fair.

In fact, without the construction of the metro system, the city would have been hard pressed to welcome the 50 million visitors to the site. And we are clearly benefiting today from the decisions made at that time.

This is particularly true in the case of major events such as the 1976 Olympic Games, the major festivals (on its biggest night, the International Jazz Festival attracts more than 100,000 people without bringing the city to a grinding halt), and the Formula 1 Grand Prix (332,000 visitors during a single weekend in 2006), which are the pride of Montreal and could not otherwise be held without paralyzing the city.

Benefits that could be maximized

In addition to permitting the holding of major events and improving the quality of life in the city, public transit also generates savings related to four harmful effects associated with transportation: pollution, accidents, energy consumption, and road space used.

The impact of these undesirable effects varies greatly depending on the mode of transportation used, and the use of public transit substantially reduces each one of them compared with travel by car. Using the methodology of Quebec's Ministère des Transports and updating it for 2003, the Board of Trade presented a summary of the savings realized in terms of pollution and accidents in its study [Public transit: A powerful economic-development engine for the Montreal region](#).

In 2003 alone, public transit reduced costs related to road accidents in Greater Montreal by an estimated \$61.9 million; it reduced costs related to polluting emissions by an estimated \$97 million the same year; and it reduced the amount of space taken up by road networks. To cite just one example, public transit trips in the reserved lane of the Champlain Bridge during peak periods represent the equivalent of three car lanes.

In short, increasing the market share of public transit quickly becomes a paying proposition. For example, a 2% increase in the modal share of public transit in the Montreal area would mean 19 million fewer car trips in the region. According to Secor estimates, the combined impact of such an increase would be more than \$150 million per year. Clearly, then, the benefits of Expo 67 and the metro system could be maximized.

The benefits associated with a 2% increase in the modal share of public transit are enormous for the Montreal area

Synthesis of the major effects of a 2% increase in the modal share of public transit in the Montreal area (2003)

• Higher added value in the region through increased disposable income for users	\$32.9 M
• Lower congestion costs	\$107.3 M
• Lower pollution costs	\$9.7 M
• Lower accident costs	\$6.2 M
• Total impact	\$156.1 M

Source: SECOR estimate

>> > Business immigration

Success through integration

Designed in large part to establish a permanent bridge between Montreal and the world, Expo 67 was, in many ways, a resounding success. In addition to projecting an image of openness and vitality, it attracted

a wave of new arrivals and, in particular, triggered an influx of French immigrants to Montreal.

Jean Filippi, owner of Montreal's Le Petit Extra restaurant at the corner of Ontario and Papineau, is one of thousands of French citizens who immigrated to Montreal and Quebec in the wake of Expo 67. "Expo generated lots of talk in France and did a lot for Montreal's reputation overseas. Before coming to Montreal, I knew I was moving to a modern, dynamic, and exciting city."

A place where anything is possible

Born in Lunéville, in Lorraine, thirty kilometres from Nancy, Filippi was not interested in taking over his family's flourishing construction and renovation business. "I didn't want to follow in my father's footsteps, even though that's what everyone expected me to do. I wanted to travel, carve out my own niche in the world, and – above all – leave a hierarchical society for a place where anything was possible."

After completing his military service, at 19, he was offered a job in a Montreal restaurant, and he jumped at the chance. He bought a one-way ticket to Canada and arrived here with \$200 in his pocket. "That was on February 17, 1971," he recalls. "One month later, we had the storm of the century."

Although his introduction to Quebec winters was a bit of a shock, Filippi adapted quickly to life in Montreal. After three months at a restaurant where the staff and owner were all from France, he began looking for another job. "I didn't want to live in a cultural ghetto," he explains. "I wanted to integrate Quebec society and work with Quebecers."

Filippi was lucky enough to land a job as a waiter at the Patriote club on St. Catherine Street, where he worked for four years. "That was it!" he declares "I saw Félix, Monique Leyrac, Jean-Pierre Ferland, Plume. I really created new cultural roots."

Becoming an entrepreneur

After the Patriote, Filippi worked at the Faubourg St-Denis, Montreal's first bar-terrace. After eleven years, in 1985 (when he was 33), he decided to go into business for himself with a colleague, Pierre Charron, a native Quebecer. Together, they bought a small forty-seat restaurant in a neighbourhood that, at the time, was not very prestigious.

"We didn't pay a lot, and the rent was low. For two people, it wasn't a huge risk."

Since then, the success of his bistro-style restaurant has never faltered. After two expansions, tripling the number of seats, the two partners bought the building where they were renting and successfully relaunched the Lion d'Or, a former night club – and later a popular "blind pig" (where bootleg liquor was sold) during the heyday of the "red light" district – transforming it into one of Montreal's hottest night spots.

Innovate and integrate

Filippi's success as an immigrant entrepreneur was based on a few key ingredients – starting with patience, since he waited almost fifteen years after arriving in Quebec before opening his restaurant.

"You must be original," he claims. "Opening a bistro, at that time, was original. Launching a business at the corner of Ontario and Papineau was not very common either."

But Filippi cautions immigrants – and anyone else planning an investment, particularly in the restaurant business – to minimize their risk. "Don't put your neck on the line. You must put your heart and soul into the business, but you must also do it according to your means."

Filippi doesn't think his status as an immigrant ever hindered his success as an entrepreneur. But he explains that he took the time to integrate Quebec society. "Whatever type of business they want to launch, immigrants must first become familiar with the local culture. They must understand the country and the people who live there. For me, that's what made all the difference."