



The Olympic dream in Montréal

1976 - Ten years after Expo 67, from July 17 to August 1, 1976, Montréal hosted the 21st Olympic Games. At the opening ceremonies, 73 000 people saw the athletes parade through the stadium. Mayor Drapeau received a standing ovation. To be able to host the games, the mayor had to convince the members of the International Olympic Committee and was under great financial stress.



Olympic Stadium opening ceremonies, July 17, 1976.
Source : Games of the XXIst Olympiad, Montréal 1976. Official report.



The Olympic Stadium under construction.
Source : Ville de Montréal. Gestion de documents et archives.

The Olympic Park along Sherbrooke Street, in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve district, covered 55 hectares. It contained the stadium, designed by French architect Roger Taillibert, pools and the velodrome. The Olympic village nearby was inspired by Egyptian pyramids. Other places, such as Maurice-Richard arena, were redeveloped, and some were built for the occasion, such as the rowing basin at Île Notre-Dame.



Jean Drapeau's accomplishments at the municipal level

Jean Drapeau remained in power for nearly 30 years, the longest term on record. When he first became mayor, he was only 38. He was defeated at the next election in 1957, but won every election after 1960. He retired from municipal life in 1986. Starting from 1962, mayors were elected for a term of 4 instead of 3 years.



The McGill metro station, around 1967.
Source : Postcard, Centre d'histoire de Montréal.

A new public transit system

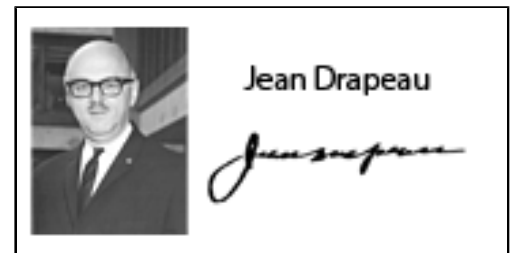
At the 1960 election, Jean Drapeau had built his campaign on the construction of a metro. He saw that as a solution to the problems of traffic congestion. Once elected, he kept his promise. The construction work began in May 1962, and the metro was inaugurated on October 14, 1966. He also saw to the construction of autoroutes such as the Ville-Marie and Bonaventure expressways.

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Montréal, international city

Jean Drapeau dreamed of Montréal as the major city in Canada and worked to give it international recognition. During his terms of office, great events contributed to the international fame he was seeking. People from all over the world attended Expo 1967 and the 1976 Summer Olympic Games. La Ronde and the Olympic Stadium still stand today.

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Jean Drapeau and Lucien Saulnier presenting the proposed metro plans, October 20, 1961.
Source : Ville de Montréal. Gestion de documents et archives.

Montréal finally has its metro system

In 1960, the idea of having a metro system was nothing new. People had been talking about it for the last 50 years. The dream was about to come true. The metro office was established in 1961 and work began in May 1962. Four years later, on October 14, 1966, the mayor and city dignitaries inaugurated the city's metro system. The underground network reduces traffic: 3 lines, 26 stations, 369 metro cars. These vehicles are all electrically powered and have the added advantage of being silent. Lines 1 and 2 closely follow Sainte-Catherine and Saint-Denis streets, and greatly relieve congested bus routes. Line 4, which runs from Berri-de-Montigny (now Berri-UQAM) station to Longueuil station, leads directly to the site of Expo 67.



The Expo 67 site (Saint Helen's Island and Notre-Dame Island).
Source : Ville de Montréal. Gestion de documents et archives.

Fifty million people flock to Expo 67

1967 - After 6 months of record crowds, Expo 67 ends. The mayor's dream came true: from April 28 to October 27, 1967, Montréal was the centre of worldwide attention. One hundred years after the birth of Canada, 62 countries played hosts to 50 million visitors to Île Sainte-Hélène and Île Notre-Dame. Montrealers had the impression of covering the entire planet with a passport as their admission ticket. Valid throughout the exhibition, the passport was just like a real passport, with the holder's photo and seals of all pavilions visited. Thousands of people kept their passports as a memento of Expo 67.

Expo 67 also saw the birth of an island in the St. Lawrence River: Île Notre-Dame. Île Saint-Hélène was a natural island, but was expanded for Expo 67. Île Notre-Dame is entirely artificial. From Jacques-Cartier Bridge, 25 million tonnes of rock and soil were transferred from metro tunnels and the bottom of the river to the designated site.