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## THE WORLDTEAMS CROSSED OVER TO THE AMERICAS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2010

Longueuil, Tuesday, July 25, 2017 – In September of 2010, the planet's top road cyclists competed in UCI WorldTour races in the Americas for the very first time, at the Grands Prix Cyclistes de Québec et de Montréal (GPCQM). Seven years on, GPCQM President Serge Arsenaault and his team look back with pride at how far their project has come and the enviable place they've carved out on the world stage, and have every intention of presenting this top-level sports gathering for many years to come, perpetuating what is now a North American cycling tradition.

### A STORY OF PASSION

Just a few years ago, élite-level road cycling was seen as pretty much exclusive to Europe, but the advent of the Québec City and Montréal races certainly helped to globalize the sport, while providing an outstanding showcase for homegrown talent. The organizers are proud to have invited Canada's national men's cycling team to compete every year since 2010, and to have helped several Quebec riders in their rise to the WorldTeam ranks. Before long, the races attracted the cream of the pro racing crop, including four Tour de France winners in Alberto Contador, Cadel Evans, Chris Froome and Andy Schleck, as well as World Champions like Peter Sagan, Philippe Gilbert and Rui Costa, who have included the GPCQM in their datebooks every year since the inaugural edition, along with 2016 Olympic Gold Medalist Greg Van Avermaet. There's also Robert Gesink, the first man to have stood at the top of the podium in both Québec City and Montréal. In 2014, Australia's Simon Gerrans made history as the first man to win both races the same year. And that's not to mention outstanding showings by stalwarts like Ryder Hesjedal and Thomas Voeckler, to name only two. Last but not least, GPCQM competitors over the years have included David Veilleux, the first Quebecer to complete Tour de France, and Antoine Duchesne, the second to accomplish that feat.

The unique character of these competitions was evident right from Year Two of the GPCQM, when the Challenge Sprint Pro, featuring the best WorldTeam sprinters, made its début in Québec City. This innovative concept, the first of its kind in the world, was an exciting addition to the sport of cycling, accentuating its athletic character as well as boosting enthusiasm for city circuits. Then, to keep GPCQM fever spreading, in 2013 the organizers introduced two mass recreational rides held in parallel with the pro races: La Québécoise and La Montréalaise Cyclosporatives. Riders of all levels had the chance to benefit from the expertise of an international-calibre organization and experience the sport in an exciting and different way, during a week of 100% cycling. In 2015, fans got to see another new event: a national criterium. The addition of the Critérium National de Montréal was one of the initiatives launched by the GPCQM to support the development of road cycling in this country and encourage emerging local talent. The Critérium National is a development competition for riders with UCI licences in the Junior, Espoir and Élite (17 to 29 years old) categories. After a long absence from the city, the organization was pleased to welcome women back to international-calibre competition in Montréal. In 2016, a Masters-category race was added, attracting a surprising number of riders.

In this spirit of promoting up-and-coming riders, the GPCQM has for several years partnered with the Fédération Québécoise des Sports Cyclistes (FQSC), providing financial support to the *Coupe du Québec Espoirs de cyclisme sur route* (a race series for ages 9 to 16). The GPCQM has committed to contributing \$10,000 to support the organizer clubs of each race and produce distinct jerseys for the various category leaders. The FQSC also organizes *Un Jour ProTour*, a day of training and exchanges with racers who have competed in the Olympic and Pan-Am Games. The objective of the program, aimed at Junior and U23 riders selected by the National Team, is to help the athletes prepare by gaining valuable

experience in international competitions. The GPCQM donates a portion of the revenue from sales of its Leaders Club VIP tickets to this program.

Recognizing that every great champion grew up with an idol, a benchmark rider who inspired and motivated them to achieve their goals, the GPCQM gives young homegrown cyclists the chance to ride alongside elite-level athletes at events. These youngsters open the road for the pros by taking part in a ceremonial start on the official course before the start of each Grand Prix Cycliste.

## OUTSTANDING BENEFITS FOR QUÉBEC

“GPCQM week has become an essential tour stop for the WorldTeams, who year after year are committed to delivering incredible sports exploits for their fans here,” says Serge Arsenault. “Besides bringing great visibility to our National Team riders, our events have showcased the host cities on the world stage and created significant economic, social and tourism benefits for Québec.” Every year, the GPCQM generate some 64 000 hotel nights in accommodations for the riders and their teams, the organizers, and visitors from Québec and elsewhere.

Since 2010, the GPCQM have acquired an excellent reputation among the riders. That popularity has also spread globally, with outstanding media coverage in more than 130 countries and a reach of one billion homes. The organizers rely on the following media organizations, among others, for that impressive coverage: TVA Sports (local), SportsNet One (National), beIN Sport (U.S.), Eurosport and Sporza (Europe and Asia-Pacific), TDN (Mexico and Central America), ESPN International (Brazil and South America), FOX Sports (Australia), J Sports (Japan), Sony SIX (India), Sports TV (Middle East), and SNTV (news agency).

## AN EXPERIENCE, A BRAND, A SUCCESS STORY

The GPCQM have also established benchmarks of quality for one-day races on city circuits, and succeeded in delivering a modern, glamorous experience for the riders, the various stakeholders in the project, and the public, who enjoy up-close access to these high-profile events. That in-person audience is also growing and becoming increasingly diverse. Since 2010, the races have attracted close to 1,500,000 spectators.

Serge Arsenault is a cycling buff and former sports journalist, and someone who truly cares about the athletes. To ensure their comfort, for the first races in 2010 he chartered an aircraft to fly the riders, their teams and their equipment, plus European media representatives, from Paris to Québec City. This partnership with Air Transat is very much appreciated. It makes the experience even more memorable for the teams since it’s the one time during the season when they can all be together on the same flight. The teams are also put up at the same hotels (Fairmount Le Château Frontenac and Hôtel Delta Montréal) and get together again at meals during GPCQM week.

From the technical challenges of the course through Québec’s capital city to the daunting Mount Royal loop in its metropolis, these two exceptional city circuits demand absolute proficiency from the competitors. The high calibre of competition has ensured the renown of the GPs around the world and in the pro racing community. “It was no accident that the UCI officially sanctioned these circuits in 2010,” says Charly Mottet, Sports Manager of the Grands Prix Cyclistes, ex-Circuit Director for the UCI WorldTour, and a former World No. 1 in the 1980s. “The organizers saw this initiative as the opportunity to expand the race calendar beyond its traditional borders. As we approach this eighth edition, we can say mission accomplished! These races have built their reputation on excellence. We salute Serge Arsenault and his team for bringing top-level cycling to North America.” Mottet adds that the logistics behind these sporting events is impressive. Each year, Air Transat flies some 95 tonnes of equipment across the Atlantic and back.

## THE GPCQM: THE TRADITION CONTINUES

In both Québec City and Montréal, spectators can enjoy close-up views of the race action free of charge from viewing stands at the Start/Finish line, and watch live giant-screen coverage of the entire race onsite.

The Grands Prix Cyclistes de Québec et de Montréal, the first UCI WorldTour events ever presented in the Americas, contribute to fulfilling one of the primary objectives of the International Cycling Union (UCI): the globalization of the WorldTour circuit. These tour stops are in addition to the existing, officially sanctioned events in Europe and Oceania. Since 2010, the organization has been responsible for the planning and the conduct of the GPCQM and counts on the invaluable support of public and private partners: the Government of Canada, the Gouvernement du Québec, the city of Québec, the city of Montréal, the National Battlefields Commission, Québec City Tourism, Tourisme Montréal, Québecor, Air Transat, and TVA Sports (official GPCQM broadcaster).

The International Cycling Union (UCI) is the international federation of cycling, recognized by the International Olympic Committee (ICO). The UCI oversees the worldwide management and promotion of the eight disciplines of cycling.

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