

70 MILLION TO DEVELOP QUEBEC TOURISM



Quebec has announced a 70-million-dollar tourism investment to be used over a three year period in order to “diversify, enrich, and develop” Quebec tourism offer. This news pleased especially the owners of ski resorts in Quebec. For most of them, the modernization of facilities and equipment is at the top of their priority list.

The money will be invested in the form of subsidies, “to support and help to materialize Quebec tourism projects, for a total of 300 million dollars”, Julie Boutlet, the Minister responsible for the project indicated, during a press conference.

“To my knowledge, it has been many years since there has been such a large tourism investment package for a three year period,” she specified, adding that **the year 2016 had been “exceptional”, namely as a result of the weakness of the US dollar, the price of oil, as well as the fact that Quebec is considered to be a safe destination.**

The objectives of the Quebec tourism ministry plan until 2020 include an increase in the amount of skiers by 5%, growth of the tourism revenues from 14 billion to 19 billion dollars, as well as the creation of 3 500 new jobs; currently 363 000 people work in Quebec tourism sector.

According to Quebec City Tourism, this announcement could help increase tourism offer during the off peak periods, either during Spring or at the end of the Fall season. “This could also offer promoters who are less robust [than Bora Parc] the opportunity to develop,” mentioned André Roy, Director of Quebec City Tourism.

Better Snow Cannons

According to the Quebec Ski Areas Association, this announcement could provide help to thirty ski stations which are in “urgent need” of modernizing their snow cannons and ski lifts. The total cost of these upgrades has been evaluated at 250 million dollars.

“With better snow cannons, we can start the season earlier; with a good start to the season, everything else will follow,” explained Yves Juneau, CEO of the Association which represents 75 out of the 76 ski stations in Quebec.

The Director General of the Stoneham and Mont-Sainte-Anne ski stations, which has had difficulties with its ski lifts these last few years, is counting on being able to submit “some projects” in order to improve his tourism offering. “We’re certainly looking to improve our snow coverage, but we are also looking into ski lifts,” mentioned Daniel Rochon, specifying however that the ski lift at the Stoneham station has only been out of order once this season.

Tariffs for Electricity

Ski stations in Quebec are also fighting a front-line battle with the Quebec government, the battle of electricity tariffs, which are considered to be too high by the stations' owners. “Vermont has an energy efficiency program, so we, in order to remain competitive, need to

modernize our infrastructure in order to guarantee that we don't lose our Quebecois clientele and in order to attract clients from Ontario and the US," explained M. Juneau.

Snow coverage represents 44% of the electricity costs of each station. The Association's case was heard before Quebec's energy regulatory body the "Régie de l'énergie" in February and it is awaiting a response which should arrive in April.

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