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Toronto attendance for FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007 quarter of way to target – It's gonna be huge!

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Toronto – The Canadian Soccer Association and the Toronto Site Organizing Committee of the FIFA Under-20 World Cup Canada 2007 are pleased to announce that 25% of attendance targets for next year's matches in Toronto have been achieved.

"We're well on our way to our attendance target," said Sharon Bollenbach, general manager of the Toronto Site Organizing Committee. "We're very pleased with sales, considering the tournament doesn't get underway until July 1st, 2007 and the draw for the FIFA Under-20 World Cup doesn't happen until March 3, 2007."

To date, 26 per cent of targeted attendance has been achieved for the 13 Toronto matches since ticket packages went on sale July 15, 2006. Nationally, over 350,000 seats (65 per cent of the stated goal) have been sold putting the event on pace to surpass its target of a total attendance at the 6 sites across Canada of 520,000, with still seven months to go before the opening match on June 30.

Canada's largest city will host the tournament's key matches, including Canada's opening match on Canada Day, along with the third place and championship matches. Toronto will also serve as FIFA's headquarters during the 23-day event.

"Toronto is the cornerstone for the tournament from the CSA's and FIFA's perspective. Success will reflect based on what is done in Toronto," said Bruce A. Thomas, Toronto lawyer and FIFA Under-20 World Cup Canada 2007, Site Chair. "The most important matches are in Toronto and the focal point is Toronto. We hope to use the event as a springboard for future soccer development and as a catalyst to secure future international sporting events for Toronto."

Much of the success in ticket sales to date is due to solid backing from the CSA and focus on the soccer communities in the GTA. The Toronto Site Organizing Committee has made inroads with GTA soccer organizations through a number of marketing and promotional initiatives that have included special ticket packages, community appearances and advertising campaigns. Over the coming months, the committee, headed by Chair Bruce Thomas of Toronto law firm Cassels Brock, will announce and implement initiatives which will enable Torontonians to further participate in this historic event.

Toronto has already begun preparing for an event that should put the city on the global sports map and be a boon to the tourism industry. Officials expect a worldwide television viewing audience of around 750 million and millions of dollars in revenue from the thousands of visitors that will come to Toronto to attend matches. In response, the City of Toronto, Tourism Toronto, the Toronto Board of Trade, the city's many BIAs (business improvement associations) and representatives of the city's ethnic communities have been working together to ensure that the event will be a success.

"This event is a tremendous opportunity for Canada as a host country as well as Toronto as a host city," said John Tracogna of the city's economic development department. Thomas echoed Tracogna's comments adding "we expect this great city to come off looking good."

The national soccer stadium is also making good progress with construction of the new 20,000-seat facility set for on-time completion. The east and south grandstands are ready, while the main west grandstand is almost complete with the majority of the seating in place. Excavation has concluded and installation of the turf will begin next week.

"We're very pleased with the progress," said Bob Hunter, committee vice-chair and executive vice-president of venues and entertainment for Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Ltd. "There are still decisions to be made, but we expect to get the building (from the contractor) by March 31, well in time for the tournament."

The FIFA Under-20 World Cup will leave a lasting legacy for soccer in the Greater Toronto Area and throughout all of Ontario. On track to become the largest single sport sporting event in Canada, the FIFA Under-20 World Cup Canada 2007 will generate revenue for the future development of soccer. Also, the national soccer stadium will be a major part of the legacy as a community-based facility suitable for year-round use.

"We see it (the event) as a connector to bringing the game forward to the next level," said Guy Bradbury, committee vice-chair and CEO of the Ontario Soccer Association. "The FIFA Under-20 World Cup will connect the game to Ontarians from an activity perspective and a spectator perspective. It will touch every corner of the province and every player."

Ticket packages are available for purchase via www.FIFA.com or by calling 1-866-662-3452 (toll-free in Canada and the USA).

FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007 – It's gonna be huge.

In 2007, the world's biggest game is coming to Canada. Canada will host the World's finest under-20 players in six cities across the country – Victoria, Burnaby, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal – June 30 – July 22, 2007.

The biennial event is second only to the FIFA World Cup in size and scope and will showcase the most talented under-20 soccer players in the world. The tournament has been the coming-out party for some of the game's top players – Maradona, Saviola, Raul, Marco Van Basten, Luis Figo, Rui Costa, Thierry Henry, Adriano, Roberto Carlos, Beбето and Dunga as well as Canada's Craig Forrest and many members of the current Men's World Cup team

Last held in CONCACAF in 1983 in Mexico, Canada's most recent participation in this event occurred last June in Netherlands from Jun 10 – July 2, 2005.

Canada enjoyed its best ever finish in a World Championship in December 2003, losing to eventual silver medalist Spain on a golden goal in the quarter-finals in the United Arab Emirates.

For more information regarding the FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada 2007, please visit www.FIFA.com.