

The Empire Club Presents



VICTOR MONTAGLIANI,
VICE PRESIDENT OF FIFA &
PRESIDENT OF CONCACAF,

WITH KRISTIAN JACK, TSN

**ON: LEADING CHANGE IN GLOBAL SOCCER:
CONCACAF JOURNEY OF REFORM, GROWTH
AND THE FIFA WORLD CUP 2026, A WATERSHED
FOR THE REGION**

Welcome Address, by Mr. Kent Emerson, Associate Vice
President at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation
and President of the Empire Club of Canada

January 30, 2019

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. From the Omni King Edward Hotel in downtown Toronto, welcome, to the Empire Club of Canada.

For those of you just joining us through either our web-cast or our podcast, welcome, to the meeting.

Today, we present Victor Montagliani, FIFA Vice President and CONCACAF President, in conversation with TSN's Kristian Jack. Today's topic is "Leading Change in Global Soccer: CONCACAF Journey of Reform, Growth and the FIFA World Cup 2026, a Watershed for the Region."

HEAD TABLE:

Distinguished Guest Speakers:

Mr. Kristian Jack, Soccer Analyst and Journalist, TSN

Mr. Victor Montagliani, Vice President, FIFA; President, CONCACAF

Guests:

Mr. David Clanachan, Commissioner, Canadian Premier League

Ms. Barbara Jesson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Jesson + Company Communications Inc.; Past President, Empire Club of Canada

Mr. Oscar Lopez, Chief Executive Officer, Mediapro Canada

Mr. Bill Manning, President, Toronto FC & Toronto Argonauts, MLSE

Mr. Scott Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Soccer Business

Mr. Bob Richardson, Senior Counsel, NATIONAL Public Relations

Ms. Stefania Szabo, Former Consul General of Hungary; Senior Consultant, Jesson + Company Communications Inc.

Mr. Ken Tanenbaum, Founder and Chairman, Kilmer Developments

Ms. Sonya Tsiros, Chief, Consular Section, U.S. Consulate General Toronto

Coming off a very successful rush in 2018, it is certainly timely to hear about FIFA's most recent experience with the World Cup, but, most importantly, we brought today's speaker in to have a look forward with us. We are so honoured to have him. We all know that the World Cup is coming to North America in 2026. Everyone is interested to know what 2026 looks like for North America, for Canada, for Toronto, and luckily Victor has brought his crystal ball.

We also know that 16 North American cities will be considered to host this game. To be considered among those 16, three cities in Canada have applied to host in what is reported to be ten games played in Canada. Those cities, of course, are Montreal, Toronto and Edmonton. FIFA will be making a final decision on what cities will make the cut. Toronto will make the cut, Victor, right? You can tell us.

I am sure no one will say anything. This is a private room. It is broadcast. No one will know. To have this discussion, we brought in a fantastic moderator. He is widely considered to be one of Canada's top soccer broadcasters. He brings more than 20 years covering the beautiful game of soccer with TSN covering the Montreal Impact, Toronto FC, and Vancouver Whitecaps, as well as those top stories from around the league. Working for TSN since 2013, he is known by soccer fans in Canada as a voice they can trust when it comes to reporting on the beautiful game domestically and internationally. Jack has been an analyst for the past five Premier League seasons, the 2014 FIFA Men's World Cup in Brazil™, the 2015 FIFA Women's

World Cup Canada™, the 2016 UEFA European Championships in France, the 2017 Gold Cup in the United States of America. He has also covered multiple MLS Cups and the 2018 CONCACAF Champions League final in Mexico for all of TSN's platforms, including TSN.ca. as well as the 2018 World Cup. He is a native of Birmingham, England, where he has made his home in Preston. He graduated from journalism school at the University of Central Lancashire. Please, welcome TSN analyst, Kristian Jack. With a life-long commitment to football, as a player and administrator, Victor Montagliani's passion for the game has led him to become a leader of the sport.

He has been serving as CONCACAF President and FIFA Vice President since May 2016.

Through his ONE CONCACAF Vision, he continues strengthening the foundations of the Confederation while focusing on developing a professional and solid structure for its 41 member associations.

With football at its core, the ONE CONCACAF Vision consists of four pillars to further growth of the game, including good governance, successful strategic planning for competitions and commercial partnerships, investment in football development and infrastructure and solid leadership.

He served as President of the Canadian Soccer Association until May of 2017. He was a transformational President for Canada Soccer. Under his leadership, Canada Soccer hosted the Women's World Cup and helped form the

professional league. Now, his talents have been recognized internationally with his work at FIFA. He is also a partner in a nationwide insurance brokerage firm, which he has grown since its inception in 2010 to over 250 employees, working alongside his business partners.

In addition to his vast knowledge and experience with the game, he has conducted studies in political science, public administration, French and Spanish. He has a tremendous amount of responsibility. If you put up the slide with all his various titles, beyond his primary responsibilities, he is also a member of the FIFA Council and the International Football Association Board.

He is the Chairman of the FIFA Football Stakeholders Committee; he is the Chairman of the FIFA Football Stakeholders Task Force, the Head of the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 Headquarters, Chairman of the FIFA World Cup Ticketing and Global Mentor for Young Leaders Mentoring Program for Sport at the Service of Humanity, which is a global movement inspired by His Holiness, Pope Francis.

Wow, he has even got the Pope in his corner. Please, welcome to the stage, the President of CONCACAF, Vice President of FIFA, Victor Montagliani. Thank you.

Mr. Victor Montagliani with Mr. Kristian Jack

KJ: Thank you, Kent.

A little bit different up here, isn't it? I can see we have got so many people here. When I was down here, I was not quite sure how many people were really here.

VM: It is all good.

KJ: It is a fantastic event. Great to be with everybody.

That video is wonderful to see what you guys have been doing at CONCACAF. I want to get to that in a second. We saw that remarkable slide up there with all your titles and all the different committees that you are on, which is marvelous. One thing it does not tell us, Vic, is what this game means to you. What did this game mean to you as a little kid growing up in the greatest country in the world, and what does it mean to you today?

VM: First off, thanks, Kent, for the introduction.

My mom would be proud. Next time we are at a family dinner, you can come over and let my family know. No, for me, football has always been about family. I see people in the audience here that have been part of that family in a lot of ways—my CSA family over here, old friends all over the room—but it

really started in a really blue-collar neighbourhood in East Vancouver, obviously, a very ethnic community.

Football was really life, whether it was my dad whose favourite football club is Inter Milan—it is not my favourite football club, but it is his. He painted our garage blue and black stripes. His truck had blue and black stripes. My brother, his second son, has the middle name Mazzola, and so is named after the famous player. To be honest with you, we never really had much of a choice.

It was just in our DNA from a young age. We all aspired to be footballers and just be in the game and around the game. I think it is really hard to get out of your system. You wake up in the morning, and that is all you think about. You go to sleep at night, and it is all you think about. Whether it is issues in football, whether it is about a result that did not go the way you wanted it to—and I see Mr. Manning nodding there—so it is a game that has really given me everything in a lot of ways. Obviously, everything starts with the family. That is the way I was raised, and a lot of things are due to my mom and dad and the sacrifices they made coming to this country. It stems from there, but also football is a big part of that—learning how to sacrifice, learning how to work with people, learning how to go through walls, knowing how to try to get along with people, and ultimately setting goals and trying to

achieve them. I think football is an education that is for your life, number one. You never stop learning, even at this age. It is something that has been, for me, one of the most important pillars of me as a human.

KJ: Fascinating stuff. You talk about it being ingrained in your system. You and I have known each other for a number of years. One of the things that I want to share with the audience is that you have not lost that passion for the game. I have been in the game and have been very fortunate to cover this game for over two decades, and I will never forget somebody, when I was doing work experience over two decades, telling me that when you cover the game in the media for a long time, it just becomes a job. I thought, “I do not want to be like that.”

VM: I know. I agree with you.

KJ: I do not just want it to become a job. I want to still love the game. That is my sense. That is still with me, and it has still stuck with me that the game is still in my heart, because I still love it, even though it is a job, and it is a wonderful job. That is the same with you.

How important has that been with you when you have been in board rooms and governance meetings discussing about the future of the game that it still remains in your heart; it is not just a job, Vic?

VM: Absolutely. There are people in the audience that know me that have been in those rooms with me. I am—do not know if it is my Italian heritage—an emotional guy, and sometimes it shows, whether I am speaking or whether it is in a meeting and it is something that is obviously important to me, that comes out. Even now, the hardest thing I find in my role sometimes when I am in a match, watching a match, and you are in a suit and tie and I am supposed to be neutral, man, that is hard. That is really hard. That is one of the more difficult things. In fact, even at the World Cup, I had the honour of riding in the cockpit with Infantino, and throughout the tournament and the organization of it.

It was kind of funny, because for a couple of games, I was giving it that *[gestures]*. He was looking at me and thinking, “All right.”

KJ: Giovanni’s got that *[gestures]*. He has got the old.

VM: I said, “Buddy, what’s going on?” He said, “I’m the FIFA President; you’re the Vice President; you can do that.” It is hard, but, yes, I think, honestly, if you have lost that, it might be as sign that maybe you should not be in the game.

KJ: It brings us to where we are today in Canada, 2019.

We are going to get on to the World Cup shortly, but it is a terrific time to be involved in the game and see where the game has come. The Canadian Premier

League start. I know we are all excited about that this year, the development of the major league soccer teams in Canada, CONCACAF, what you have accomplished in your short time there, bringing it to an expanded Gold Cup coming this year in North America as well. There is a lot of enthusiasm right now and there should be, shouldn't there?

VM: Yes, absolutely. I think if Canada is a brand in itself, it should be pretty happy in terms of where it is at.

Obviously, there is a long way to go in some areas, from a results standpoint. Hopefully, we will see those coming in as well—maybe with the Women's World Cup, maybe the Gold Cup. I think between the work that has been done on the three Canadian MLS clubs—they have been really the top clubs off the field and on the field as well. Obviously, TFC have, in the last few years, been a top club and a flagship in a lot of ways.

I know Atlanta had a great year this year. Obviously, with the Canadian Premier launching yesterday with their announcement, there is really the creation of what I think has been lacking in this country: An industry of football. It is great at the grassroots. I think we do that better than everybody. I can say that because I get to travel to 211 countries. I think we are almost the best in the world when it comes to that—grassroots, but where we lack it is at the sharp edge of the game. Although we have had it with MLS and maybe even before that with

the NASL, it has not been broad enough. It has been good in that, but it needs to be broader, where Canadians can aspire to work in football, whether as a coach or administrator or, obviously, a player. I think that to me is where we are heading, where we need to head to really change the culture of football in this country.

I think that is where we are heading right now, between the World Cup being the north star for 2026 and, as you said, with the MLS teams the way they are going, with the CPL and even things that are happening underneath that. I have been at the grassroots level, League 1 here, in Ontario. It has been a tremendous success. I think you are starting to see some significant alignment that I think could lead to maybe football—sorry, I do not call it soccer—being perhaps the sport of choice in this country, even, dare I say, in this town, surpassing our national sport.

KJ: You mentioned culture there. We will get to the World Cup shortly, but before we get to that, regarding the Canadian Premier League, you were a huge proponent of it, a big believer of it when you were with the brilliant guys at the CSA. It is starting. It is here.

One, how important is it for patience? Two, how excited are you to have this league now in Canada as you continue to represent the flag as you go across these CONCACAF regions and talk about Canada getting their own league?

VM: One of the things I did when I became President was sit down with the General Secretary at the time, who is over here, Peter, whom you introduced. There were two things that I said to him that have to be done.

Well, three. One was the execution of the Women's World Cup, which went off without a doubt. The other two were bidding for the World Cup, and a lot of people laughed at us, to be honest with you. I even have the original article, I think, in one of the Toronto papers that took a shot at us because of that. I still have it in my drawer. I am not joking you. I do not forget.

The other one was the league because I think that was one of the most important things—you talk about the flag. Actually, Peter said to me when I became CONCACAF President, “You know one of the best things, one of the unique things, now when you speak publicly anywhere in the world is that that flag will be behind you.” I thought about that. That was meaningful because in football, there are only two narratives in football. There is club football, so you are a TFC fan, or you are a Forge fan or an Impact fan or an AC Milan fan, god forbid.

KJ: These things are on the way up, though. You are all right.

VM: I know they are on the way up. Or it is your national, your country. To me, it has always been about sovereignty.

One thing you never give up on football is your sovereignty.

I think the Canadian League is part of that. I know in North America we have this dynamic of cross-border, and it is important. It could be the wave of the future as well, I think. I think sovereignty, as I said before, is the industry standpoint. I think that, to me, was what league really represented. It is not just about 7, 8, 12, 15 teams. That is all great. It is about, really, the sovereignty of your country. To me, that is the most important thing in football. I see it when I travel in Central America. These guys do not give it up. They do not care. They may not have a Rolls Royce, but what they have is theirs. To me, that is very, very important. I think the role the MLS can play in Canada is they have done it where they have actually grasped that Canadiana from a development standpoint. Whether it is investing in Jonathan Osorio, or whether it is investing in the youth team ISM, and bringing players up that are now in the national team. That sovereignty can be manifested in many different ways. I think it is important that that has to really be at the core of what you do if you are a Canadian, or if you are working in Canada.

KJ: You mentioned the World Cup there. Growing up in England, I learned pretty quickly that—

VM: You are never going to win it?

KJ: We did not rehearse that, by the way, but it kind of worked out. I was eight years old when Diego Maradona pushed the ball in the back of the net and knocked England out. I learned very quickly that things could not go my way. There is nothing more powerful, for me, in sport, than those two words being put together: World Cup. Even to this day, you talk about the club game over the international game. We talk a lot on TSN about all the games we do. The club game, I think anybody in the audience would admit, at the very highest level, technically, has been played at a far superior level than we will probably ever see in international football now. There are lots of reasons for that, money being one, superior fitness, coaching, being together in camps every single day rather than international breaks that come along. There is nothing like the World Cup. We have got it now coming to this North America in 2026. Before we get to that let us take a look back at what happened in 2018 in Russia.

[VIDEO.]

KJ: Images and emotions that will stick with millions of people around the world after a fantastic World Cup, arguably one of the greatest World Cups ever. I know I had a lot of fun with CTV and TSN this year. We did over 200 hours of coverage around that World Cup.

That was great. We are in another World Cup here with the Women's World Cup again this year, which is going to be an absolute treat. But, in 2026, it is officially coming here. We talked about it earlier.

Those emotions, those memories that people—it becomes ingrained with them from the World Cup. That is going to be created here. Some of those emotions are going to be created on Canadian soil.

How significant is that, Victor, and how important is it that we, in Canada, make sure that it is not just about the 32 days of the World Cup, that it becomes so much more?

VM: I have no doubt that the tournament in 2026, in June and July, will be a fantastic success, and we will have those emotions, like every World Cup does, some more than others. Hopefully, it will be better than this one on the pitch as well. The reality is, from our perspective, first from a CONCACAF perspective, and specifically from a Canadian perspective, what we have to ensure is that it is not just a tournament in June and July of 2026, that you have a seven-, eight-year run here and beyond that. I think the planning needs to go even beyond that, that it really becomes a legacy for the sport and there are so many opportunities leading up. Actually, I met with the mayor this morning.

There are things already I think Canada can be doing. I think everybody wants to get busy with their own provincial championships and their own little club. That is all great. I think the leaders of the sport in this country need to wake up that there is an opportunity, and you need to start galvanizing together.

You have got to have the corporate world come in, in conjunction with the football community, with the federation, with the cities. It has to be all in concert, so that you can maximize every opportunity you can, so that the sport becomes what it can be after the World Cup and not just that legacy of an event. I think if you can do that, you will see really a different Canada. I know that there have been times we have had other events, maybe in other sports, where people have said it is nation-building. The reality is, with all due respect, there is really only one sport that can really do that. That is this. I hate to say that, but the Olympic Games do not really nation-build. I think they are great, and they can put an investment, but it is such a multi-sport environment that it is hard to build on anything. A lot of the sports are nonexistent in between the Olympics, let us be honest. This sport is not like that. This is in every day of your life. You have got club football; you have got youth football; you have got women's football; you have got it all. It is every year. This sport has an opportunity to really

nation-build. I think this is what we have to realize in this country.

KJ: This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

VM: Absolutely.

KJ: This is also unprecedented for anybody who is not aware. It is the first World Cup, or it will be the first World Cup where three countries have come together to host. You cannot say this, so I will. You played a massive part in bringing those three countries together under the CONCACAF umbrella. Many people, not that long ago, whether in life or soccer, looked to these countries as enemies, and now they are coming together as part of, you use the word ‘family’, the soccer family, to come together and host the biggest World Cup ever. The relationship has already been created.

Now that Canada is a part of hosting the biggest event in the world, how important is it to show not just the world, but the United States and Mexico, under your CONCACAF umbrella, that we are as big as you guys, here? We might not be hosting as many games, but this is not just the United States World Cup with a few games thrown to Canada. This is the true tri-bid here.

VM: I can tell you from a FIFA perspective—I will put my FIFA hat on—this is not a United States World Cup.

Anybody that says that is delusional. This is a united

bid World Cup between three countries with so many games in the U.S., so many games in Canada, and so many games in Mexico. That is it. It is not a U.S. World Cup. It is not a Mexico World Cup, and it is not a Canada World Cup. It is together. CONCACAF will play a role moving forward, because the region will benefit from it. It will not play a direct role as those three countries, obviously, but it will play a more indirect role. It truly is a regional World Cup. It is not going to be like '94, and it is not going to be like 2015, the Women's World Cup here, or 2007. It will not be that. It will be something completely different. It is new territory, even for FIFA.

I think it is an opportunity. It is an opportunity, and everybody is jumping on board now, because regarding 2030 already there have been some announcements. Argentina is bidding with Paraguay and Uruguay. Peter, we should have trademarked the united bid. England is looking at Scotland and Wales and, I believe, Northern Ireland to look at their bid for 2030. Spain and Portugal are looking at Morocco for kind of a united bid.

KJ: We are trailblazers here. We can show them how it is done.

VM: Absolutely. It is a unique opportunity.

KJ: I guess final question before we open up to Q&A—

make sure we get time there—is about legacy, the legacy of the World Cup. You talked about what needs to be done between now and then, is that the legacy of that should, from a player’s point of view, concern the entire game so that the entire country continues to fall in love with the sport. The legacy—can you speak a little bit about that in terms of what can become of Canada and their love for the game after 2026?

VM: I think legacy, to me, is a two-sided coin. One side is the obvious side, the infrastructure side: Leagues will get better; clubs will get better; federations will get better; provincial associations will get better. That is all great. The other side is the human side, which is what I like to call it, because you just talked about how this was the greatest World Cup you remember, the ’86 World Cup. I remember the ’78 World Cup when you can only watch it on—I had to skip school to go to the Agrodome, so I could watch it on closed-circuit.

My dad actually allowed me to skip school. He just told me, “Do not tell your mother.”

KJ: Now she knows.

VM: Now she knows. What I am saying to you is that I was a ten-year-old kid. That was a fire that was ignited in me that has lasted me my whole life.

If we can ignite more fires because of our World Cup into our children, male and female, like the Wom-

en's World Cup did, when I saw grown men walking around with Christine Sinclair jerseys. If we can ignite that fire, that, to me, is a bigger legacy than a training pitch. To me, it has to do both. It has to be the obvious, what we can see, what I call the hardware, but the software, to me, is so important. It is the software that really provides the legacy for your country.

KJ: Amen to that. We could continue this discussion and talk about, obviously, the expanded Nations League for which you have been a big proponent. The Gold Cup comes this summer. It is going to be different countries, now, really, for the first time—16 teams, and the Gold Cup as well. It is a very exciting time for Canadian Soccer, CONCACAF as well.

Questions & Answers

KJ: We do have a microphone in the audience. If anybody has any questions, please, raise your hand; introduce who you are.

Q: Hi, my name is Karim. I have been a soccer referee for the last 11 years. I started out refereeing under five, and now I moved up to men's soccer, so actually if someone works for the CPL, I might come and talk to you later. I am glad I am talking to the FIFA Vice President. I guess the question I had was

currently, right now, they do not start keeping score in Canadian soccer until about age 12 or 13.

I am worried, as we work towards building a competitive 2026 team, whether that is the best way to develop talent? I do not mean to grill you, but as a soccer fan...

VM: You might not like my answer but that is okay.

Q: I guess I will open up the floor to you.

VM: I think one of the things we have to realize is where competition really matters is at the sharp edge of the game. It is for our national teams; it is for the pros over here, not for 12 year-olds. The reality is that, I will give you a name, Johan Cruyff, God rest his soul.

You have heard of Johan Cruyff—not a bad player, I would say. Johan Cruyff never played an 11-a-side football until he was the age of 13. That means they never kept score. It was all about learning this.

If it is good enough for Johan Cruyff, it is good enough for our children. I think some of the things that the CSA is implementing through Jason deVos' leadership is long overdue. Things that we have talked about are, I think, finally being implemented.

For instance, that is one of them. Trust me, the kids know the score. Who are you trying to keep score for, the parents or the kids? The kids know the score.

Trust me. Johnny knows that he scored three goals and that they won 6-4. Trust me, because he is telling the guy on Monday at recess, “Hey man, I got a hat trick on the weekend.” Trust me. The game is for the kids. It is not for the adults. We need to think that way. That is number one. Number two, there are other things. For instance, some provinces have promotion and relegation at youth. That is absolutely ridiculous.

As one technical director said, “Some of the ways we treat our youth football is tantamount to child abuse.” That is what I heard one technical director saying.

I do not necessarily disagree with him from a mental standpoint and psychological standpoint. We need to do a better job. I think what has been laid down by the CSA, finally, and it has been a long time coming, and it is not that we did not try to lay it down before, but I think one of the words that I would like to see federations do and the CSA do is use the word ‘mandate’ more often. With all due respect, one of the differences between our culture and other cultures is that people respect the infrastructure.

We do not have people running around saying, “Well, I’ve got my little ten-year-old club here in Burlington, and I am not going to listen to the CSA, because I know more.” No.

Quite frankly, anybody that thinks that way can do me a favour and actually retire, because you are actually

doing a disservice to your players. The reality is you need to get with the program. The program starts with the National Federation and then to the pro clubs.

Q: My name is Vincent Alvarado. I am a sport business management student at Humber College.

We did not get mentioned at the beginning, but that is fine. My question for you, Victor, is, with 2026 happening, obviously, we have the Gold Cup, which is our big regional tournament. We are going to have a few of them before 2026.

Typically, the tournament is held in the United States. From a logistical standpoint, obviously, that has always been the best way forward to host that tournament. With all the infrastructure going in, all the development happening in Canada, is there a chance to finally have the Gold Cup held completely within Canada in the years leading up to the World Cup?

VM: Yes, this year is the first year that we are actually going to have venues outside of the U.S. We did have it in Toronto in 2013. We had a double header. Now, this is the first time we are having Costa Rica.

Actually, it was announced, and then there will be a Caribbean venue that we will announce in about a month's time. It is the first time we are bringing it out,

because one of the things that I think the Gold Cup can do is not only expand the Gold Cup, not only develop on the pitch, but it is off the pitch in development markets. I think Canada is prime to host a Gold Cup.

I think hosting an entire tournament might, in the short run, not be probably reasonable just because, I think, with all due respect, the economics. We do not have 100,000-seat stadiums, to be blunt with you.

When I can sell out the Rose Bowl at 100,000 seats, you have to balance development with economics.

I have still got mouths to feed at CONCACAF and then my development department and people asking me for money for this and this and that, so I cannot turn down 100,000 seats at the Rose Bowl, because I am going to put it in a 23,000-seat stadium. Can I have more games in Canada? Absolutely.

Toronto is a fantastic market. We know Vancouver is. We have other markets that are coming on board in Alberta, in Winnipeg and, obviously, Montreal, even Halifax one day. What I am saying is I think Canada can play a bigger role in the Gold Cup perhaps from a venue standpoint, but, in terms of hosting the entire Gold Cup in Canada, I do not see that in the near future.

Q: Stephen Henderson. I am an intellectual property entertainment lawyer here in Toronto at Cassels

Brock. My question is we have seen Calgary reject putting a bid forward for the Olympics.

We have seen Vancouver decide not to bid as part of the World Cup bid. I am wondering how you can mobilize the World Cup bidding cities in Canada, but also in the U.S. and Mexico to try to ensure that the various levels of government actually support the bid in the way that you would like to see it happen?

VM: Are the governments supporting the bid?

Q: In terms of how can you mobilize them to ensure that the World Cup comes off in the best way possible?

VM: From a government standpoint, it is more about having some guarantees that are part of the bid package.

Those have been given by the feds and the provincial government. After that, really, a lot of the engagement is not so much with the feds and the provincial government. There is some of it, but it is really at the local level with the cities. That is where a lot of the energy will go, whether it be fan fests and those kinds of things. The federal level of government is more involved when the event happens. Even at the Olympics, for instance. I am from Vancouver. The federal government was not involved other than, obviously, funding some of it, but they were kind of there when

the Olympics were on, because, obviously, they are our federal government, and they were there at meetings and stuff like that.

You will see that, but a lot of the engagement of a lot of these international events happen at the local level, as it should, really.

Q: My name is Peter Kotsopoulos. I am part of the corporate world. I have been a coach for a long time, a player for a long time. My background is similar to yours. My parents are from another country, and I was born here.

I have got a lot of passion. As a coach, I would say that the kids have always been happy until the parents tell them not to be happy. Here is my question, and out of respect for the CSA, who are in the room: When Canada fields a worthy national team for the World Cup and Italy makes the world cup, or hopefully makes the World Cup, who are you going to cheer for?

KJ: He is going to make sure they are not in the same group.

VM: Let me tell you something. Cold, hot. First of all, the World Cup in 2026 has a possibility of having eight teams from the CONCACAF region, because it is 6 ½, plus you get another half, because you are the host.

We could get eight teams. Let me tell you something right now. I will cheer for all eight of those CONCACAF teams before I cheer for Italy.

KJ: I think that is a great way to finish right there.

Again, please, join me in thanking Victor Montagliani.

KE: I have the pleasure of also inviting Bill Manning, the President of Toronto FC and Toronto Argonauts up to the stage to give a thank you to Victor and to Kristian.

Thank you, Bill, for being a sponsor. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bill Manning.

Note of Appreciation, by Mr. Bill Manning, President, Toronto FC and Toronto Argonauts

It is my honour, today, to give the closing remarks. Thank you, Kent, and the Empire Club for putting on a great event, today. It was probably seven or eight years ago when Victor first came on my radar screen. I was running a team in major league soccer, called Real Salt Lake.

There was a new president of Canada Soccer, and he was very vocal and very boisterous, and we had not seen anyone in Canada like this man before.

He talked about the Canadian women's team being the best in the world—not being among the best, but the best

team in the world. He was the first person I can remember from Canadian soccer to talk about the Canadian men's national team being a regional power, along with Mexico and the United States and being a world team that could be amongst the top 20 or 30. I checked this quote.

You said, "Canada Soccer, within the next 10–15 years, will be one of the top 20 or 30 teams in the world." I will tell you, we are well on our way. Canada will be amongst the best 20 or 30 teams in the world, probably by 2026, 2030, maybe even 2034, but it is because of this man that they will get there. They hosted the 2015 Women's World Cup, which was arguably the greatest Women's World Cup ever. That was certainly because of Victor.

In 2016, he went to CONCACAF. I remember, and we had not met yet. We had not met until I came here to Toronto.

I remember saying, "Wow, this guy is not only going to do things, he is going to do things for this region." I got a chance to get to know Victor a bit when I joined TFC over the last few years. In sports, we use a term, 'the real deal', when you talk about a player. This guy is the real deal.

He is the real deal. This World Cup, I will tell you: There is no one in the world more responsible for uniting three countries, the United States, Mexico, and Canada, to host a World Cup than this guy right here.

He is the only guy that could take those three countries, put them together, and, I predict that the World Cup 2026 will be the greatest World Cup this world has ever seen, and

it is because of this man. He is a great leader, great collaborator and a great friend. Please, another round of applause for Victor.

Concluding Remarks, by Kent Emerson

A couple of quick announcements. I want to make one more thank you to Bob Richardson, who is a mentor of mine. He has done a terrible job at that, but he did a fantastic job at helping with this event and doing a lot of stuff for this event. Thank you very much, Bob. A couple of more individuals in this room that I found out were here: One is Councillor Mark Grimes, who is the Councillor for Ward 6, and the second is Rudy Cuzzetto, the new MPP for Mississauga–Lakeshore. If you could, please, stand. I just want to recognize you. Thank you for coming as well.

We have a great event coming up next month, which I believe starts almost the day after tomorrow. That is with the President of MDA with the topic “Canada in the New Trillion Dollar Space Economy.” That is a great event.

We have some other political events coming up with the federal and provincial government that we will be announcing in the coming days. Ladies and gentlemen, thanks for coming today.

The meeting is adjourned.