

# MACCABI LEADERS HOPE TO GENERATE INTEREST IN 2017 GAMES

By [Janice Arnold, Staff Reporter](#) - April 3, 2016 > 4820 > 0



Mark Singer, left, and Daniel Smajovits, the Quebec regional co-chairs of Maccabi Canada

**MONTREAL** – The Maccabi movement’s presence in Quebec is being revitalized with the naming of two young regional co-chairs who hope to interest Jews of their generation and the next in this international Jewish sports organization.

Mark Singer and Daniel Smajovits, who are just shy of 30, are taking over the reins in this province in time to drum up enthusiasm for the next Maccabiah Games in Israel from July 4 to 19, 2017. This is the 20th edition of the Games, held every four years, which are the largest competitive sports event in the world after the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games.

The two sports fans wish they had known about the Maccabiah Games when they were attending Bialik High School. Singer, who played hockey, and Smajovits, an all-round athlete who excelled in basketball, baseball and touch football, say they may well have tried out for the Canadian team if they had.

## READ: TEEN SNOWBOARDER HAS HIS SIGHTS ON THE OLYMPICS

“The road to the 20th Maccabiah Games” will be launched in Montreal on April 6 at the Gelber Conference Centre at 7 p.m.

Maccabi Canada leaders will be on hand to provide information on the organization and regional tryouts and other events leading up to the Games. Singer and Smajovits are hoping young athletes and their families, as well as past participants in the games, will come out.

One well-known former alumnus, Mount Royal MP Anthony Housefather, who won seven medals in masters swimming at the last Games, will play a starring role that evening. It is hoped his predecessor, Irwin Cotler, who played table tennis at an earlier Games, will also be on hand.

Maccabi Canada board member Leon Elfassy acknowledges that the Toronto-based organization has not had a high profile in Montreal for some years, and says that must change.

Leadership here has largely relied on two powerhouses of the Maccabi movement, Roy Salomon, an internationally respected figure, and Gary Ulrich, who has been its top fundraiser for many years, he said.

Salomon, 79, said he is delighted to see a much younger generation step up.

Quebec athletes have traditionally made up about a quarter of the Canadian team at the games, Elfassy said, while those from Ontario make up half the team and the other 25 per cent come from the rest of Canada.

In 2013, Canada sent more than 400 athletes, among a total delegation of close to 600. The Maccabiah has events in nearly all the Olympic summer sports, as well as ice hockey, in which Canada is the reigning champion.

Besides the open competition, Maccabiah has juniors competition for those 15 to 18, and masters from age 35 up, although, of course, those in that age group can go for the open if they can perform at that level. There are also events for disabled athletes.

The April 6 meeting, which is open to the public, will be followed up with Sports Days, led by Maccabi coaches and athletes, at three Jewish schools. People including Olympic wrestler David Zilberman and former Concordia Stingers basketball coach John Dore are involved.

These half-day workshops take place at Herzliah High School on April 12 (juniors) and April 13 (seniors); Hebrew Academy on April 14; and Bialik on May 16.

The benefits of an active, healthy lifestyle for all will be stressed. The kids will then rotate in smaller groups among clinics in various sports.

While identifying athletically talented Jewish youth is an important part of their mission, Singer and Smajovits are also trying to put together a Quebec region board made up of their peers.

## READ: ORTHODOX JEWS TRAIN MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT WITH FRUM KARATE

“We are looking for people like us, who love Israel and sports, whether we play or just watch,” said Singer, who is in commercial real estate. “Maccabi is the one organization that allows you to bring those two passions together.” Each co-chair has visited Israel twice, although they have never been to a Maccabiah.

Smajovits, who today owns his own sports agency and is a public relations consultant, said he learned about Maccabi from Farrell Miller, when Miller owned the short-lived Montreal Juniors of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, some years ago.

Singer and Smajovits stressed their gratitude to Salomon, as well as to Elfassy and another stalwart, Teddy Miller.

“We wouldn’t be where we are today without Roy as a mentor,” Smajovits said.

Later in the year, Maccabi will hold two fundraisers: a touch football tournament at Hampstead Park in August, in conjunction with the Donald Berman Chai Lifeline, and the Mike Yuval Maccabi Canada Tennis Classic at the Nuns’ Island centre in November, an event now in its 12th year.

For further information on Maccabi in Montreal, email [MaccabiQuebec@gmail.com](mailto:MaccabiQuebec@gmail.com).