

## MMFA BOARD SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT AND CALLS FOR MORE RESERVE

**Montreal, August 28, 2020 – There comes a time when people must stop saying or writing nonsense. There comes a time when it becomes impossible to remain silent in the face of an endless stream of lies conveyed by individuals who have become the spokespersons of Ms. Bondil and by a member of the Board of Trustees of the Museum who is, to say the least, failing to meet his duty of reserve. Faced with criticisms and slanderous accusations flowing from all sides, based on nonexistent facts, the Board has no choice but to respond and set the record straight.**

Let's be clear. By making the decision to terminate Nathalie Bondil's contract as Director General and Chief Curator of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the members of the Board of Trustees knew what they were doing and were fully justified in their decision. For them, the unhealthy environment that had prevailed within the institution for too long could no longer continue. Supported by a report prepared by human resources experts, which lifted the veil on this work environment established under the direction of Ms. Bondil, and by the testimonies of numerous employees, current and past, the members of the Board acted with full knowledge of the facts. How can anyone pretend that Board members were not exposed to the report when a 90-page PowerPoint prepared and presented by the independent HR firm, detailing the findings and recommendations was presented to them? A meeting at which the dissenting member of the Board, Mr. Joe Battat, was in attendance - contrary to his statements. How can anyone pretend that Ms. Bondil was never made aware of the report's conclusions when hours of meetings took place in her presence to present and discuss the report, its findings and its recommendations? Despite efforts to work with her to find a solution, Board members were met with denial and intransigence, leaving little choice but to terminate her contract. Ms. Bondil had lost the confidence of the Board and could no longer run the Museum.

Surprisingly, even though over a hundred Museum employees recently decided to bravely speak out on the abuses of the Bondil era, some still believe that her dismissal was unjust. Moreover, how can one claim to be a defender of great principles of governance, like Michel Nadeau, while ignoring the serious management problems within the walls of the Museum? These observers would have benefited from speaking with all the women and men, who are the true soul of the Museum, before writing or saying anything, just to please the one who fuels their obsession. Worse yet, trying to minimize the climate prevailing at the Museum by reducing it to a simple anecdote that occurred during an exhibition held last fall demonstrates their bad faith.

The same individuals who are now calling for the return of Ms. Bondil would have had every interest in speaking with the members of the Board. They would have learned that the Board offered Ms. Bondil the same conditions under which she would have been able to continue working on the projects that were close to her heart, while taking advantage of a very advantageous financial arrangement. Unfortunately, she refused this offer, instead choosing the path of confrontation.

The Board of Trustees is also accused of having been confronted with a *fait accompli* by its chair, who some are convinced wishes to run the Museum. Anyone who believes that clearly does not know him and clearly does not know the members of the Board. Michel de la Chenelière was in fact very present at the Museum, as were other members of the Board who were concerned about the administrative management of the former director general. Whether in respect of the hiring of the director of the curatorial division or the decision to terminate Ms. Bondil's contract, the Board of Trustees had all the information it needed to make the necessary decisions. These were collective decisions, not those of the chair of the Board alone. It is also astonishing that Michel Nadeau does not remember that he himself congratulated the chair of the Board on the quality of the process leading to the appointment of the new director of the curatorial division, an appointment that was praised by the entire Museum curatorial team.

In closing, the Minister of Culture and Communications has appointed an expert who is currently leading a series of interviews and meetings in order to shed light on the events. The expert has received, under extreme confidentiality, the report that led, among other things, to the decision of the Board of Trustees to terminate the contract of the former director general of the Museum. Now, we must wait for the results of this work which, we hope, will finally turn the page on this unfortunate chapter for the Museum and its employees. We would hope that all those participating in this debate will show similar wisdom.

**Sources:** Alix d'Anglejan-Chatillon, Clare A Chiu, Jonathan Deitcher, Michel de la Chenelière, Sylvie Demers, Marcel Elefant, Roger Fournelle, Sari Hornstein, Jean Houde, Sénateur Serge Joyal, G. Pierre Lapointe, Brian M. Levitt (Honorary President), René Malo, Stéphanie Marchand, Lillian Mauer, Alanis Obomsawin, Jacques Parisien (Honorary President), Jessica Pathy, Rémi Quirion, Julia Reitman and Michaela Sheaf.

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