



**Analysis of the circumstances surrounding the
cancellation of the Montréal Pride Parade on August 7,
2022**

Montreal, October 4, 2022

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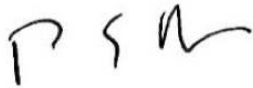
Greetings,

On August 11, I was mandated by the Montréal Pride Board of Directors to analyze the circumstances surrounding the cancellation of the Montréal Pride Parade which was planned to take place on August 7, 2022.

This analysis is intended to contribute to the work of the Post-mortem Committee created by the Board of Directors.

I want to thank everyone I interviewed. Their testimonies allowed me to produce this analysis and I hope it will give you the tools you need to improve procedures and governance.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P S N' with a flourish at the end.

Philippe Schnobb, ASC

CC: Ms Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montréal

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In case of doubt, the original French version has precedence.

Description of Mandate and Methodology

On August 11, the Montréal Pride Board of Directors mandated me to support the ad hoc Post-mortem Committee with an analysis of the situation.

The mandate covers the following points:

- The thread of events surrounding the Pride Parade cancellation and the communications related to this decision;
- The governance and the organization's ruling processes that may have led to this decision;
- The financial and reputational impact on the organization and its ability to achieve its strategic goals.

On August 12, a press release issued by the City of Montreal and Montréal Pride was published to announce my nomination.

On August 15, I began a series of interviews with Montréal Pride Executive Director and permanent and contractual employees. Subsequently, I conducted individual interviews with each Board Director. I also contacted institutional, private and community partners to examine the potential consequence of the cancellation on their support to the organization.

From August 15 to September 9, I conducted about sixty interviews, each lasting from fifteen minutes up to two hours. I analyzed all information collected during these interviews in order to write this report.

I was able to retrace the course of events after interviewing all people involved in decision-making, looking at phone records and exchanged text messages and emails. These elements allowed me to reconstruct the thread of events and cross-check each communication. Technology has its limitations: other than emails and text messages, I was unable to verify the precise content of phone conversations. Still, it is possible to draw conclusions by cross-referencing all exchanges.

I also had the opportunity to consult several internal documents to help me understand specific elements related to the Pride Parade and Festival overall organization.

To respect the privacy of those involved in key moments, I chose to remain vague in the description of people's tasks and functions. Nevertheless, I did share this information with the Montréal Pride Post-mortem Committee and the Executive Director to guide their work.

I would like to thank everyone who agreed to talk with me, particularly the staff of Montréal Pride who was very honest and whose collaboration was essential to the process.

Summary

In hindsight, one can easily say that things should have been done differently. My mandate is to understand the sequence of events, draw conclusions and make recommendations that will be useful not only for Montréal Pride but also for several organizations that could benefit from this analysis to examine the fragility of their operation.

I concluded that the Pride Parade was canceled because of a misunderstanding caused by a series of chaotic exchanges and communication issues, worsened by the reaction – either too fast or too slow – of certain key people in the operational chain. Most conversations were urgently made over the phone when it would have been wiser to form a crisis unit to make an informed decision.

The Executive Director (ED) and his team found themselves faced with a *fait accompli*: the Pride Parade had been canceled without their approval. At 8:53 a.m., the ED has no choice but to authorize the publication of the press release confirming the cancellation. It will be published on the Montréal Pride Facebook page at 9:13 a.m., while media have been announcing the cancellation since 8:41 a.m. (32 minutes), which is a long time given how fast news travel.

After over a hundred hours of interviews and analysis, I can affirm that the Pride Parade was not canceled voluntarily or maliciously. I conclude that some information was misunderstood, not validated and transmitted externally, thus leading to the cancellation of the Pride Parade without the decision being taken formally by anyone in a position of authority at Montréal Pride. In addition, the lack of supervision and the work overload of a key person within the organization may have led to a recruitment oversight – recruitment which was crucial to ensure security at closed street intersections. In the 2022 post-Covid-19 context, it is important to mention that personnel recruitment was an important challenge in the festival sector.

My interviews also highlighted that Montréal Pride's governance is not fully understandable to stakeholders. In addition, governance has been weakened by the departure of previous leaders who were founding members of the organization. I believe that the current moment represents an opportunity to evaluate the organization's governance, as well as making it more efficient, open, and transparent.

To achieve this, I believe that the Board of Directors should consider a re-foundation of the organization to assure stakeholders that Montréal Pride can organize an annual festival which is one of the 10 most important events in Montreal's events calendar with a budget of \$6 million.

This re-foundation should begin with a redefinition of the membership status. Throughout my analysis, I noticed that the annual general meeting of members is held by less than 20 people, which seems inadequate to ensure sound governance. Secondly, the Board of Directors must be professionalized. The skills required to sit on that Board should be listed to ensure that all members have the capacity to support the Executive Director in the attainment of the organization's mission.

I encourage the Board of Directors to consider a profound governance overhaul. The organization would greatly benefit from doing so.

Description of Montréal Pride and Context

Montréal Pride was created in 2007 when Divers/Cité – then the organizer of Pride activities – announced that there would be no Pride Parade that year. Divers/Cité wanted to create two distinct events: the Festival and the Pride Parade. Unable to agree on a new date with the municipal authorities, the 2007 Pride Parade was canceled.

When the Pride Parade was abandoned, a new group emerged to found LGBTQA Celebrations with the support of community groups and business owners in the Village. The new organization managed to organize a parade within a few weeks. Divers/Cité eventually ended its activities and LGBTQA Celebrations took over the organization of the annual festival, the Pride parade and community days as we know them today. Eventually, the organization will become Fierté Montréal / Montréal Pride. Divers/Cité will cease operations in 2014.

The organization's budget has increased significantly over the years, from \$140K in 2007 to over \$5M in 2022 post-COVID-19, peaking at \$6.4MM in 2019 when Montréal Pride was a candidate for World Pride 2023. The organization surely grew in importance, though its governance remained the same. In 2020, significant changes to its leadership caused uncertainty and the current Board of Directors is amid a governance reorganization.

Over the years, public and private funding have increased considerably. On average, external funding represents 85% of Montréal Pride's revenues. Here are the main budget data for the 2019 edition, the last “normal” edition before pandemic hit.

Revenues		6 403 500 \$	%
Governments	Federal	655 395 \$	10,2
	Provincial	1 719 136 \$	26,8
	Municipal	410 000 \$	6,4
Others	Loto-Québec	249 083 \$	3,9
	Tourisme Montréal	292 158 \$	4,6
Private sector		888 990 \$	13,9
Earned revenue		318 464 \$	5,0
Related activities		499 637 \$	7,8
In-kind products and services		1 370 637 \$	21,4
Expenses		6 339 343 \$	

Source: Montréal Pride. Financial statements as of September 30, 2019

The main expenses of Montréal Pride are attributed to the Festival. The 2022 budget includes expenses of \$150K for the Pride Parade and less than \$50K for Community Days. The Pride Parade represents less than 3% of spendings in the 2022 budget. Revenues from major sponsors (excluding registrations for Pride Parade and Community Days) are included in the general revenue and are not specifically attributed to the Pride Parade. In the annual activity report the financial statements do not distinguish between the three components.

The Montréal Pride Festival is considered one of the 10 most important events in Montreal major events' calendar. For example, a KPMG study established that Montréal Pride 2017 festival edition generated over \$10M in economic benefits. This is not surprising since a large part of the benefits (62%) come from the many participants from outside Quebec – comparable to the Jazz Festival (60%), Grand Prix (66%) or Osheaga (78%) – according to an analysis made by La Presse based on various studies carried out by members of the Regroupement des événements majeurs internationaux (RÉMI).

The Pride Parade itself attracts tens of thousands of spectators, 100 thousand according to the organizers' estimates. This influx of local parade participants surely represents a substantial economic contribution, appreciated by business owners both downtown and in the Village.

This year, the Pride Parade would have brought together 12,000 participants registered in 137 contingents covering a 2.7km circuit on René-Lévesque Boulevard. As usual, it was planned that spectators gathered along the street could join in the cortège at the closing of the parade.

On Sunday morning, the first participants were expected to arrive on site around 8:30 a.m. to decorate their floats before the start of the Pride Parade at 1 p.m.

Volunteers and Montréal Pride staff were scheduled to arrive on site, at different time and rendez-vous point, starting at 7 a.m.

The Pride Parade requires hiring 317 volunteers. Of them, 200 are assigned to security and are responsible for closing the streets at intersections, using metal fences as barricades. The other 117 are assigned to various tasks, including carrying the giant rainbow flag or the arch of balloons that opens the parade.

Event Timeline as Known by the Public

On the morning of August 7, thousands of people were up early to get ready for the Pride Parade, a comeback after being canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic and transformed into a community march in 2021 to meet public health requirements.

The organizers expect 12K participants and around 300 people to secure the Pride Parade. As usual, security is about to be deployed on the 2.7km route to supervise the 100K people who usually attend the event along René-Lévesque Boulevard.

Volunteers and personnel gather at the Sheraton Centre on René-Lévesque Boulevard to collect their equipment. Dignitaries are invited to the same place.

There are concerns: it is a very hot day, the weather forecast mentions that the humidity index will reach 40° under a blazing sun, with the potential for violent thunderstorms during the Pride Parade.

Suddenly, a virtual thunderstorm shakes the city: a journalist on Radio-Canada's radio show "Dessine-moi un été", announces that the Pride Parade is canceled:

Host: 8:41 a.m., there's a breaking news?

Journalist: Yes, [...] our colleagues in the newsroom just had this announcement confirmed: the Pride Parade has been cancelled.

Host: Do we know why?

Journalist: What we learn: lack of security personnel, lack of volunteers, 100,000 people were expected, 12,000 participants, we will try to get more information by the end of the show...

In the minutes that follow, cellphones vibrate from all media alerts. TVA, La Presse, Radio-Canada, and other media announce the cancellation of the Pride Parade.

Montréal Pride confirms the news on its Facebook page at 9:13 a.m.

This is shocking to all people getting ready for the Pride Parade and for the organization itself. Astonishment transforms into anger, then acceptance. Hypotheses are made: the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) would have forced the cancellation after police officers were excluded from the parade; others say that Montréal Pride would have received threats. But as soon as the announcement is official, the community wants answers: if there was a lack of personnel to ensure security, why didn't they call us?

The Mayor of Montreal, who was at an unrelated press briefing, expresses her frustration and requires an independent investigation to shed light on the circumstances that led to the cancellation.

Here are the results of this independent analysis.

Global Analysis

A factual analysis reveals that all that matters happened from 7:46 a.m. to 8:03 a.m.

On Sunday morning, the organization is aware of volunteer recruitment challenges, yet not critical. Two hundred persons are needed to ensure security, i.e., 104 volunteers and 96 greeters and information agents. The organization can count on 48 volunteers recruited by an external organization, Centre ABC, and 41 volunteers provided by itself, Montréal Pride. With the expected 96 greeters and information agents, there would be 185 volunteers out of the 200 needed, which is not ideal, though not jeopardizing to the operation of the Pride Parade.

At 7:46 a.m., it is observed that the 96 greeters and information agents expected will not show up because they have not been recruited.

At 8:03 a.m., a conversation between two key people constitutes a turning point: a confusion induces one of them to announce the cancellation of the Pride Parade due to a lack of staff. This misunderstanding generates a series of actions that will result in the demobilization of security agents and police officers. The ED is not yet aware of the situation.

At 8:04 a.m., the Executive Director is informed of the situation and gives instructions to remain on standby.

The **8:03 a.m.** conversation at the origin of this misunderstanding is transmitted to the SPVM at **8:12 a.m.**, which will lead to the demobilization of the police force supervising the parade around **8:40 a.m.**

Up until now, the information had spread within the organization. **At 8:41 a.m.**, the announcement on the radio that the Pride Parade was canceled aggravates the crisis. This public announcement was made without due validation with Montréal Pride, though it is not the reason why the Pride Parade was canceled. However, it added confusion to the unfolding situation and played a role in the ED or his team's inability to take a step back.

At that time, was it still possible to stop the course of events by issuing a press release saying that the Pride Parade would indeed happen, despite what was relayed on air, even if it meant reducing its size similar to the 2021 parade?

In fact, the ED arrived on site at **8:43 a.m.** From the first call he received at **8:04 a.m.**, he had been handling the crisis on the phone from his home and in a taxi. Throughout this period, his instructions remain the same: "We remain on 'standby'". However, while approaching the site, he did not know that the SPVM had been informed of the Pride Parade's cancellation, he did not know that the police and volunteers had been demobilized and he did not know that the cancellation announcement had been broadcast on the radio.

He runs to the Sheraton Centre and runs into people who tell him that the parade is canceled. On site, he finds out that normal car traffic has resumed on René-Lévesque Boulevard and that there is no one in the Pride Parade staff room. Earlier he had called the Board President and a Board Director without success.

At **8:53 a.m.**, he gives the authorization to confirm the news – which was already out.

Looking back, it could be said that the ED canceled the Pride Parade without consulting the Board of Directors. In theory, he is accountable for the actions or inactions of his subordinates.

He told me that he found himself faced with a *fait accompli*. At that moment, he had no specific information on the missing resources. People assigned to the Parade were telling him that there were not enough people to provide security for the Pride Parade while there were no resources to be found at the Sheraton Centre – which should have been bustling with activity at that time.

August 7 Decision-Making: Observations and Recommendations

The cancellation of the Pride Parade is the result of chaotic exchanges over the phone, by text messages, and with a sense of urgency.

Montréal Pride has an emergency response plan with corresponding protocols for several types of events that may occur on the Festival site. The chain of commands appears well described. The Board President does not appear in the decision chain.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Request an external analysis of the emergency response plan and update it by adding the Board President to the decision chain. Organize a training session to ensure understanding of the plan.

There is no emergency response plan for the Pride Parade. The existence of such a plan would have enabled all stakeholders to refer to it and ensure that all decisions had been validated by the right person in the decision chain before communicating them externally.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Provide the organization with an emergency response plan for all Pride Parade-related activities. Organize a training session to ensure understanding of the plan.

The failure to recruit 96 people to manage traffic around the Pride Parade was known on Sunday morning. The nature of the activities and the status of these people created confusion – which will be described in the next chapter. The omission could have been detected if a list of required personnel and components had existed and had been reviewed by senior management, ensuring that nothing was missing.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Structure parade activities with a clear list of requirements that will be regularly reviewed by senior management to ensure that all requirements are fulfilled.

Description of Previous Events: Logistics

Finding out on Sunday morning that 96 people are missing to ensure security is at the root of the cancellation.

These individuals are titled “greeters and information agents”. Their task is unappealing: they are positioned along the Pride Parade route to move the metal fences that block the road. They are therefore located in places where they see absolutely nothing of the Pride Parade.

I was able to consult the Pride Parade’s planning document, which was a detailed document that indicates, among other things, the workforce required for each street corner along the route. This comprehensive document also demonstrates the rigorousness with which the planning work was done. It stated that 200 people are needed to move the metal fences at street intersections.

TOTAL	BARRICADES	AGENTS ACCUEIL	BÉNÉVOLES
	335	96	104

Source: Montréal Pride Logistics Department

In order to reach the 200 individuals required, the document states that the 96 greeters and information agents must be accompanied by 104 volunteers recruited by an organization called Centre d'action communautaire Saint-Laurent ABC. This organization has a contract with Montréal Pride which guarantees the presence of 100 to 125 volunteers. In July, a few days before the Pride Parade, ABC notifies Montréal Pride that they will only be able to provide 48 volunteers.

Noting that the ABC Centre could only provide half of the expected volunteers, Montréal Pride recruiters were asked to find more volunteers: 41 volunteers were then added to the list. It gets a bit confusing and that's exactly what happened during the organisation of the Pride Parade. We lost count and we also feared that the expected volunteers would not show up given the weather on this Sunday morning.

As mentioned previously, the 48 ABC volunteers and the 41 volunteers provided by Montréal Pride, plus the 96 greeters and information agents, bring the number of people expected to 185 out of the 200 required. A situation which is not ideal, but not catastrophic either.

On Sunday morning, the now known fact that 96 greeters and information agents have not been recruited – and the importance of their role to ensure security – is thus a cause for concern.

I tried to understand how they could have "forgotten" to hire 96 people. It should be noted that the person responsible for hiring paid staff never received a request to hire 96 greeters and information agents and therefore is not the person at fault here.

I consulted the Pride Parade budget prepared by the logistics team. The budget includes nearly \$12K for the recruitment of volunteers by the ABC organization and the hiring of 16 paid greeters and information agents with very specific functions. There is no mention of 96 greeters and information agents to hire to provide security at the barricades along the Pride Parade.

The greeters and information agents required do not appear in the budget and would therefore have been volunteers, but no request was sent to the person responsible of volunteer recruitment.

Personnel required for the 2022 Pride Parade (budget planning)	STAFF MEMBER
Zone Supervisor + training and meetings	1
Zone Heads – 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. according to placement (including mandatory meeting)	10
Section Supervisor – 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.	1
Section Heads – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (including mandatory meeting and trainings)	30
Production Team	15
ABC Centre – (\$12K fee for recruitment of 125 volunteers at 7 a.m.)	125
Greeters and information agents – Bike Squad (8)	8
Greeters and information agents – Emergency Corridor (6)	6
Greeters and information agents – Restroom (2)	2
Yellow Rope Supervisor	1
Safety Supervisor	1
Vehicle placement Supervisor	1
Pacing Supervisor	1
Dismantling Zone Supervisor	1

Source: Montréal Pride Logistics Department

This recruitment demand wasn't made and there was no mechanism in place that could have detected this omission. It was assumed that the 96 greeters and information agents were paid. The fact that two types of positions have the same name – while some are paid, and others are voluntary – adds to the confusion.

Moreover, to understand this control failure, it should be noted that the Pride Parade Coordinator hired in May 2022 was fired at the end of June, 7 weeks prior to the event. The logistics team and the Executive Director suggested to fill the role with a new person, but the person in charge of the Pride Parade decided to take on themselves the additional workload.

Also, two weeks prior to the Pride Parade, the person responsible for recruiting and supervising the volunteers went on sick leave and never returned. The additional workload was shared between colleagues – already overloaded – a few days before the Festival. Even if helpful, supervising volunteers requires frequent, direct and personalized attention.

The absence of the Volunteers' Coordinator combined with the team's work overload led to email follow-ups instead of calls, which is far less effective to ensure the presence of volunteers at the event. In addition, this person must provide volunteers with schedules and assignments, so they

show up at the right place and time. This is an important function that cannot be fulfilled without rigorous follow-ups.

The person in charge of supervising volunteers at the ABC Centre told me that it was difficult for her to obtain the necessary information she was supposed to give to the recruited people.

The work overload of a key person who assumed several functions probably explains the omission of planning for the recruitment of 96 people and the difficulty of guaranteeing the presence of volunteers.

The confusion around the status of these people and the absence of a budget item also explains why no one noticed the omission. The confusion was such that the ED first told La Presse in an interview that the missing staff had not been hired, though corrected the next morning that the people had been hired but were assigned elsewhere. The ED reported the information given to him, but there was still confusion when I met with the team.

From June 6 until June 16, the ED held daily follow-up meetings with the team. From June 20, meetings were held weekly. I consulted the summaries of these meetings: the recruitment of volunteers never comes up as a problem. Apart from those meetings, the various teams work side by side in a single office, which facilitates constant communication.

My meetings with the staff also highlighted that several people were lacking experience and the departure of two key people a few weeks before the event added to the concern.

The ED explained that he was aware of this situation but that the Logistics Director repeatedly assured him – at team meetings and regular one-on-one meetings – that everything was under control.

Several seasonal employees hired in May by the logistics team told me that they should have been hired in March given the magnitude of recruitment and provision tasks involved.

Logistics: Observations and Recommendations

The lack of experience and the departure of two key people in the logistics department contributed to amplify the sense of urgency in the weeks prior to the event, which could explain why certain requirements may have been overlooked.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Specify the requirements and share the performance indicators with the management team who can ensure that nothing is forgotten.

Greeters and information agents and the volunteers appear crucial in the running of the Pride Parade. It would be judicious to provide for hired staff rather than rely on the presence of volunteers. The attendance rate of paid staff is higher.

RECOMMENDATION 5

From now on, all personnel required to supervise the security of the Pride Parade should be paid.

The Festival's budget does not differentiate its activities. Thus, it is unclear for a reader from outside the organization what cost is attributed to which activity in the audited financial statements.

RECOMMENDATION 6

It is recommended to establish project-based budgeting for categories of expenses and income to ensure transparency in the financial statements published annually.

Montréal Pride's activity reports and financial statements are not published on their website; I found them on the City of Montreal's website. Transparency is an essential value in a healthy governance, even more so when it is necessary to regain partners' trust. Montréal Pride does not have to comply with the Access to Information Act. Yet, since 85% of its revenues come from governmental, progovernmental or private sources, it calls for public transparency. Throughout my process, I had to recall the importance of transparency to ensure the independence of my work.

RECOMMENDATION 7

It is recommended that the Ethics and Governance Committee establishes a proactive disclosure plan.

Cancellation's Subsequent Events: Crisis Management

At **9:13 a.m.**, Montréal Pride confirms the cancellation of the Pride Parade on its Facebook page.

The crisis does not end here.

On social media, all sorts of rumors are circulating: it could be a revenge from the SPVM caused by Montréal Pride's refusal of their contingent at the Pride Parade; others wonder if any threats were received. Mob justice calls for the Executive Director's dismissal and the Board of Directors' resignation.

On social media, the press release accentuates the crisis: it stated that the decision was made jointly with the SPVM – but the SPVM was only conforming to the instructions they received from the organization staff member.

Several organizations offered help when the news of lack of staff broke. Hydro-Québec was even ready to deploy its Parade contingent to key points to ensure security.

Unfortunately, this collective support comes too late to save the Pride Parade: on site, everything is dismantled. It would have been impossible to call back the participants after they were told to go or stay home. The team did consider organizing a community march the next week, but the idea was quickly abandoned.

The ED begins a long series of media interviews. The press officer manages interview requests remotely, judging it would not be efficient to drive an hour to be on site. The ED is mostly alone at the Sheraton Centre and gives interviews one after the other.

The Board President contacts the ED at 9:21 a.m. and asks him why they were not consulted. The ED reminds them that he tried to call them at 8:24 a.m. without any success.

The entire Board of Directors arrives at the Sheraton Centre at 12:23 p.m., summons the ED and prohibits him from giving other interviews. The Board of Directors has already obtained the support of a crisis management consultant. The Marketing Director and the press officer ask permission to address the Board of Directors; they explain that it is essential to keep the same spokesperson in a crisis management and that the exclusion of the ED would send a bad signal that could weaken the organization. The Board of Directors allows the ED to give the remaining scheduled interviews, but the instruction is given not to accept new requests.

The Board of Directors tries to find out what happened and passes two resolutions: first, the creation of an investigation committee and, second, public relations will be managed by the Board President and the ED must obtain the approval of the Board President for all public relations matters. The firing of the ED is considered.

Taking a step back is wise given that the situation is very unclear. What follows is a demonstration that the thread of events is complex. It took me over 60 hours of interviews to complete this analysis.

In the following days, the Mayor of Montreal asked for an independent analysis regarding the thread of events. On Thursday, August 11, the Board of Directors asked me to assist its Post-mortem Committee. This report is my contribution to their work, which is now to respond to the recommendations accordingly.

Crisis Management: Observations and Recommendations

In the heat of events, the Board of Directors' reaction is quite understandable. The reputation of the organization was tarnished, and the Board Directors felt that their personal reputation was on the line as well. However, in a crisis, you must keep focus in order to make the right decisions. It would have been unwise to fire the ED on the spot.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Board of Directors has already initiated a process to improve governance, which includes training. It is essential that crisis management be included in the training program.

RECOMMENDATION 9

This training must also include a section on the roles and responsibilities of the Board Directors, Officers and Executive Director.

Sustainability and Governance of Montréal Pride

The third part of my mandate is to determine whether the cancellation of the Pride Parade will have an impact on the sustainability of the organization.

I had discussions with major public, private and community partners.

All the partners I spoke to reiterated their support to the organization, conditional to the conclusions of my analysis.

However, I discovered throughout my discussions with partners that the functioning of Montréal Pride's governance is not clear to most, thus creating discomfort.

My mandate aims to shed light on the Pride Parade's cancellation context of August 7. However, I believe that it is relevant to include an analysis of the governance since this aspect came up several times throughout my discussions.

The Board of Directors has already initiated a process to review the organization's bylaw. I encourage them to reflect further on the matter, and I believe that the crisis caused by the cancellation of the Pride Parade is an opportunity for Montréal Pride to regain the trust of partners and the public.

I believe that this approach must lead to a refoundation of the organization.

The Board of Directors is elected by the General Assembly of its members. I was surprised to find out that the General Assembly of Montréal Pride has less than 20 members electing 7 Board Directors responsible for the governance of one of the ten most important events in Montreal's event calendar. This membership includes current Directors and inactive members. The refoundation should begin with a revision of the organization's bylaw to broaden the membership and to ensure greater partners' representativity within the decision-making body. Such operation is delicate. A fair balance must be found as to not interfere with the organization's ability to pursue its mission according to the expectations of the public, private and community partners – expectations that are at times divergent.

The governance review should also include a well-defined board matrix to ensure alignment of the organization's mission. Community involvement is very noble, but relevant expertise is needed when one becomes a Board Director of such an important event.

Montréal Pride should also benefit from its ongoing strategic planning to clarify its mission and vision.

One might wonder about the statements found on the organization's website, whether the commonly recognized principles of sound governance are applied.

On the website, the vision – which should describe what Montréal Pride wants to become in the short term – is poorly formulated and looks more like a mission statement:

Vision

“The Montréal Pride Festival celebrates the power and beauty of diversity by allowing 2SLGBTQI+ communities to shine with people here and abroad.”

The mission statement – which should describe what the organization is – is rather a long list of actions that should derive from the vision. Moreover, it is surprising that the organization of a Festival ranks sixth on a list of eight priorities.

- *Demystify and raise awareness on the realities of 2SLGBTQI+ communities of Montreal and in Quebec to the general public;*
- *Work to advance 2SLGBTQI+ human rights here and abroad;*
- *Highlight, promote and take part in the work of 2SLGBTQI+ groups in Montreal who fight against discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity and serophobia;*
- *Offer the 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Montreal and Quebec a showcase for cultural expression. More than 70% of the artists are Montrealers;*
- *Remember and celebrate the social and legal achievements of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Montreal and Quebec through festive, social, political, community and advocacy components;*
- *Organize the largest 2SLGBTQI+ national gathering each year;*
- *Hold festive, cultural, social, political, philanthropic, advocacy and community events throughout the year;*
- *The Montréal Pride festival strives to promote Montreal here and abroad.*

Montréal Pride is currently assisted by consultants specialized in strategic planning. I was able to consult the diagnosis presented in June to the Board of Directors and the Executive Director. The diagnosis is very lucid and should be updated to consider the impact of the cancellation – which has exacerbated some observations.

Governance: Observations and Recommendations

Montréal Pride's reputation has been tarnished and the current crisis is a good opportunity to strengthen relations with partners. I believe the current revision of the bylaw and regulations is an opportunity to proceed to the refoundation of the organization, starting with the expansion of the Assembly of Members who elect the Board of Directors.

RECOMMENDATION 10

It would be relevant to benefit from the current revision of the bylaw and regulations of Montréal Pride to proceed to the refoundation of the organization and broaden the membership to stakeholders.

With a \$6 million budget allocated to the organization of a festival and a parade that attracts tens of thousands of local participants and tourists, Montréal Pride must have qualified people on its Board of Directors. Without presuming the competence of the current Directors, it is essential to provide relevant skills and socio-demographic profiles so that the Board of Directors can support the Executive Director in the attainment of the strategic plan. Diversity is a noble goal, and it must be part of the criteria for professionalizing the Board of Directors, without being the supreme criteria.

RECOMMENDATION 11

It would be relevant to benefit from the current support of a governance specialist to clearly define the skills required to ensure the proficiency of the Board of Directors.

Montréal Pride has mandated external consultants to support the Executive Director and the Board of Directors in designing a strategic plan. This approach is essential, and the diagnosis should include the August 7 events' impact on the organization. As part of this process, it will be essential to define a risk registry so that the Board of Directors can take their responsibilities towards the organization's sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION 12

Montréal Pride's ongoing strategic planning process must continue and include the Pride Parade cancellation's impact on stakeholder relations. This process should include the creation of a risk registry.

Throughout my discussions, many people referred to the important amount of VIQ passes distributed. The VIQ ("Very Important Queer") space is a sought-after location that offers a clear view of the site, as well as access to catering and bar service, including some freebies. The distribution of VIQ passes is poorly regulated. The mechanism for distributing VIQ passes should be reviewed. In theory, this space aims to thank partners, network, and find new partners for Montréal Pride – not to boast about distributing them.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Ethics and Governance Committee should assess the distribution of VIQ passes. It would be appropriate to clearly define the purpose of this space and establish the conditions required to obtain a VIQ pass. The annual report should contain relevant information about the space costs, including the value of perks.

Conclusion

My analysis of the thread of events, based on the summary of phone conversations and text message exchanges, does not allow me to blame a single person for the cancellation of the Pride Parade.

On August 7, 2022, the Pride Parade was canceled due to a series of confused, too fast exchanges that will lead to specific actions, making the cancellation inevitable. It is a regrettable misunderstanding.

Who switched the light off? Impossible to know – it is off.

As for the past events that led to a recruitment oversight, I believe that the departure of key people, the work overload and the lack of supervision contributed to the omission not being detected.

Upon its arrival in September 2021, the new Executive Director of Montréal Pride took the initiative to meet numerous community partners to build bridges with the community.

These connections with the community and partners could have been put to good use in the week prior to the Pride Parade, when it was noted that the recruitment of volunteers was lacking. If they would have communicated with partners to ask for help, they might have made up for the absence of greeters and information agents noted on Sunday morning.

This analysis aims to understand what happened to prevent it from happening again.

I make no recommendations on human resources. I believe that the Post-mortem Committee, the Board of Directors and the Executive Director have the necessary information to make informed decisions in this regard, if that is their will.

Additionally, changes that previously occurred in Montréal Pride's governance came up several times during my interviews. The departure of two founding members – who occupied the positions of Board President and Board Vice-President, and jointly assumed the daily leadership of the organization – created an instability that the Board of Directors and the current Executive Director are trying to overcome. It is important to stop making comparisons between new and old. I have been impressed by how bright the people I met over the past few weeks are. The team should unite by meeting current challenges rather than dwelling on the past.

Management will have to show great leadership to ensure the success of the 2023 edition and the Board of Directors will have to have the courage to proceed to the refoundation of the organization.

I hope that my analysis and my conclusions will be useful to Montréal Pride and to any other organization that may have hints of flaws in its organizational structure.

Philippe Schnobb, ASC

Recommendations Summary

RECOMMENDATION 1

Request an external analysis of the emergency response plan and update it by adding the Board President to the decision chain. Organize a training session to ensure understanding of the plan.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Provide the organization with an emergency response plan for all Pride Parade-related activities. Organize a training session to ensure understanding of the plan.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Structure parade activities with a clear list of requirements that will be regularly reviewed by senior management to ensure that all requirements are fulfilled.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Specify the requirements and share the performance indicators with the management team who can ensure that nothing is forgotten.

RECOMMENDATION 5

From now on, all personnel required to supervise the security of the Pride Parade should be paid.

RECOMMENDATION 6

It is recommended to establish project-based budgeting for categories of expenses and income to ensure transparency in the financial statements published annually.

RECOMMENDATION 7

It is recommended that the Ethics and Governance Committee establishes a proactive disclosure plan.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Board of Directors has already initiated a process to improve governance, which includes training. It is essential that crisis management be included in the training program.

RECOMMENDATION 9

This training must also include a section on the roles and responsibilities of the Board Directors, Officers and Executive Director.

RECOMMENDATION 10

It would be relevant to benefit from the current revision of the bylaw and regulations of Montréal Pride to proceed to the refoundation of the organization and broaden the membership to stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 11

It would be relevant to benefit from the current support of a governance specialist to clearly define the skills required to ensure the proficiency of the Board of Directors.

RECOMMENDATION 12

Montréal Pride's ongoing strategic planning process must continue and include the Pride Parade cancellation's impact on stakeholder relations. This process should include the creation of a risk registry.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Ethics and Governance Committee should assess the distribution of VIQ passes. It would be appropriate to clearly define the purpose of this space and establish the conditions required to obtain a VIQ pass. The annual report should contain relevant information about the space costs, including the value of perks.