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Setting a new crisis course

Top 40 Under 40 alumni and honourees recount how they adapted to handle the difficulties that arose with the pandemic. See inside.



NATIONAL POST, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2020

CANADA'S TOP 40 UNDER 40 2020 HONOUREES



CANADA'S TOP 40 UNDER 40 SHOW HOW TO LEAD IN A CRISIS

MARY TERESA BITTI Postmedia Content Works

When the world stopped in March to try to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the selection process for Canada's Top 40 Under 40 was well under way. Nominations and submissions were in and due diligence had just started. The question quickly turned to whether it was relevant or even appropriate to be working on an awards program celebrating leadership. Just as quickly, it became clear the answer was yes. Leadership is more important than ever when you're facing a crisis.

"We saw superlative responses to the pandemic, both in terms of taking care of their employees and pivoting their organizations and contributing to their communities," says Jeff Freeborough, managing partner, Toronto, Caldwell Partners, creator of Canada's Top 40 Under 40. "This year's honourees are leaders not just in their organizations but in their communities. One of the key elements of the award is social responsibility, and this year's honourees really stepped up."

More specifically, they took charge. "We asked honourees questions about how they were dealing with the pandemic," says John Hughes, senior vice-president, private enterprise, at MNP, Canada's largest accounting tax and business consulting firm serving mid-market companies and Top 40 presenting partner. "Not surprisingly, they were taking the bull by the horns.

Figuring out solutions on the fly to keep their people, customers and channel partners safe and to continue to follow through on the promise of their organizations."

Carole Saab was appointed CEO of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) right in the thick of the crisis. The organization was adapting to remote work and pivoting to pandemic-response mode to help municipalities meet the health and safety needs of their communities while also addressing the mounting financial crisis in these communities. Saab and her team jumped into action creating resources, sharing best practices and making sure municipalities had access to the information they needed. FCM conducted a national research report to quantify the scale of the losses and lobbied the federal and provincial governments. Its advocacy helped garner \$7.6 billion for municipalities. "COVID has impacted every single aspect of our sector, organization and work," says Saab. "It is a moment and experience like no other."

Since its inception in 1995, Top 40 has recognized more than 800 outstanding Canadians who have gone on to establish themselves as difference-makers, creative thinkers and performance drivers both here in Canada and globally. A few general themes have emerged since the relaunch of Top 40 four years ago, chief among them the growing diversity of nominees and honourees. They come from across the country, from across industries and sectors and from var-

ied cultural backgrounds. There has been a steady climb of people of colour among nominees and honourees. "While there is a lot of work to be done when it comes to diversity, we are starting to see more representation at senior levels and this is filtering through to Canada's Top 40 Under 40," says Freeborough.

Another consistent theme: many honourees are first-generation Canadians born to immigrant parents making their mark in Canada. Kosi Stobbs, CEO of Property Owl Group of Companies, and Jas Hothi, national enterprise risk leader for EY Canada, are among this group of honourees doing just that.

This year's cohort also reflects the ongoing trend of Canada's growing entrepreneurship and innovation. "This is a testament to Canada's growing cadre of entrepreneurs and the support ecosystem that has evolved enabling companies to scale and become market leaders," says Freeborough.

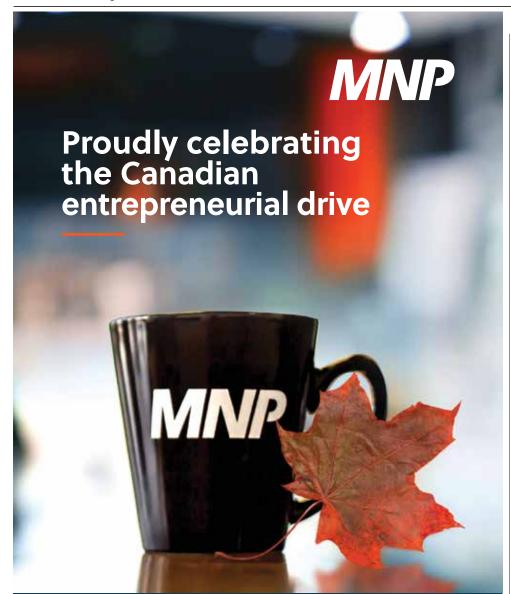
It's difficult to talk about any industry or sector without talking about technology and its impact, particularly during the pandemic, which has proven to be the biggest remote-work experiment ever. "If you look at Top 40 honourees such as Sam Masri, COO of SAP Canada, a pure technology company that makes enterprise resource planning systems, or Lyla Garzouzi, vice-president, distribution, at Hydro One, or Halazon Ghassan, founder and CEO of EMERGE Commerce, they are capitalizing on data

analytics and using technology to better understand customers and be more efficient," says Hughes. Rohan Mahimker and Alex Peters, co-honources and co-founders of Prodigy Education, an online educational math game, are establishing Canada's presence in the burgeoning global

edtech sector. Of course, innovation extends beyond technology. Joelle Faulkner is founder and CEO of Area One Farms Ltd., which provides financing, private equity and growth capital to the farming community. "Many of these businesses are asset-rich because farms have been in families for generations," says Hughes. "What she's doing uniquely to help finance transitions and expansions and how she supported farmers through the pandemic to help keep grocery stores open and food on the table is an example of the innovative spirit of Top 40 honourees."

Succession is another trend emerging among Top 40 honourees, as more of the next generation are starting to work in or on family businesses and taking them to the next level of growth. "Andrew Oliver, president and CEO of restaurant and event company Oliver & Bonacini Hospitality, has reinvented the company and moved it into the event and hospitality space to position it for future growth," says Hughes. "Through the pandemic, the industry has had significant challenges, but he pivoted quickly to make sure it comes out the other side."

es out the other See LEADER, PG5





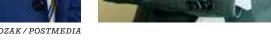
Congratulations to all of this year's nominees and honourees.

Together with Caldwell, we proudly recognize Canada's best and brightest. In this year's Top 40, we witnessed outstanding achievements by those who embody the entrepreneurial drive that continues to make Canada a global leader.

Wherever business takes you

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managing partner, Toronto, Caldwell Partners. and board members used

John Hughes, left, senior vice-president, private enterprise, at MNP, and Jeff Freeborough,

Selection process met challenges for 2020 Top 40

LEADER Continued from FP7

This year's honourees were selected from a field of 1.000 nominations that resulted in 350 written submissions that led to about 100 individuals being chosen for an interview. Caldwell and MNP conducted the interviews virtually and then created a shortlist of candidates for the independent advisory board to consider. The selection meeting, which is typically held in person in May, was conducted over Zoom on Sept. 15, 2020. Some 35 people, including the advisory board comprising industry and professional leaders from across Canada, which includes past Top 40 recipients, took part.

Representatives from Caldwell Partners were on hand to answer questions

the Slido polling app to cast Each honouree was

selected based on their

achievements in each of four selection criteria:

- Vision and innovation
- Leadership
- Impact and influence ■ Social responsibility

"This year it felt more important than ever to celebrate our young leaders and their successes," says Free-

borough. "These are folks doing remarkable things. They are taking risks. They see things differently. They create opportunities for themselves, for their people, their organizations. They are role models. In this uncertain time, seeing these leaders step up and support and create opportunities is vital both to the economy and society."





When the pandemic arrived

MARY TERESA BITTI Postmedia Content Works

Six Canada's Top 40 Under 40 alumni describe how they're providing a steady hand during this time of unprecedented change and what they've learned from managing through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kevin Read, president, CEO and founder, Nomodic

The moment COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic: I was in Orlando, Fla., at a modular building conference when it was announced the NBA and NHL had suspended their seasons because of COVID-19. I flew home March 12, 2020 and spent two weeks in quarantine. That turned out to be an opportunity to sit in one place and think. I'm on 125 flights a year and until then, I didn't notice how hard it is to travel that much because I was working on delivering my vision.

Rapid response

On Friday, March 13 we assembled in the boardroom for a meeting and closed the offices on Monday. As a construction company we were deemed an essential service. We did a tonne of research and our sites developed a COVID-specific manual with all the protocols necessary to ensure physical distancing and safety. Everything focused on how are we going to take care of everyone this week? Communication was paramount. We had early-morning meetings with executive teams. We set up a COVID committee and made sure we shared health authority news. Clients were made aware of our policies. We held weekly town halls over Microsoft Teams to update all of our 130 employees across Canada and the U.S.

Making a difference

I was appointed to the Modular Building Institute's COVID task force representing Western Canada. We looked at what we could do with existing inventory of modular buildings to help. Units were quickly converted to temporary medical clinics for testing and to serve as quarantine facilities and mobile treatment centres. From day one (at Nomodic), our purpose has been to leave things better than we found them. COVID-19 has highlighted the disparity in health-care services, particularly for the Indigenous population in remote communities. It made us think about how we could make a difference by taking an innovative approach to problems that existed even before the pandemic. We've been working on the design of long-term flexible spaces that can meet immediate needs and be converted into senior living, supplementary care facilities ... whatever is

Lessons

I can be a more effective leader by doing less. I don't think I would have ever learned that if I hadn't been forced to stop. Sometimes you have to slow down to speed up. That is absolutely what happened.

Dr. Prabhat Jha, Director **Centre for Global Health** Research (CGHR), Professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and PI, **University of Toronto**

The moment COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic: In March, I took a week to go to Guadeloupe with my family. While I was





there I got a note that everyone was becoming nervous and scared. I wrote an email back as soon as I landed, saying this is an extraordinary pandemic. We are the leading epidemiological research centre in global health in the country. We have a responsibility now to up our game and figure out how we take on this pandemic directly.

Rapid response

We took special precautions to return to work safely and then it was about getting people to see the value of science and information. We can't outsmart the virus unless we study it. We have to know how it operates and the level of infections.

Making a difference

We've done work in two areas. One is trying to understand who COVID kills. where and how. From that we're learning there are a lot of avoidable deaths. Now we're looking at how did the world get to a million deaths and what can we learn from those experiences across countries.

The other part is trying to get a handle on how many people have been infected. In April, Angus Reid released a poll showing eight per cent of Canadians were reporting symptoms that might be suggestive of COVID. I called him on April 20 and said, 'I like your data, what can we do with it?' That evening we decided to launch a national antibody study. In the next three weeks the results will give us a picture of how many Canadians got infected in the first wave, with differences by age, province. We didn't wait to try and get funding. We just did it. During this same time, CGHR received a \$1 million grant to help countries monitor COVID deaths. We created a simple tool in record time that's being tested in India

and Sierra Leone.

Rapid response I called my partners, my team, our artists, our board to see how they were doing and how their businesses were doing. Everyone started working remotely. We still do. That's not something that would have happened two or three years ago. I just didn't expect you could be so productive working remotely. I always trusted my team but the pandemic put me in a situation to really empower them to make key decisions and that saved some of our festivals. I thought we needed to postpone Festival Haiti en Folie because there were so many live events and it attracts about 100,000 people. My team all said no, we could definitely do this online. They came up with a plan. We attracted more than 1,250,000 festival-goers Always have someone online from all over the who is sceptical inside the

Making a difference What's happening (with the resurgence of Black Lives Matter) has affected everyone here because we are a Black-led and owned organization. With that came new opportunities. We landed partnerships with Netflix, National Bank and the Canada Media Fund for our incubator, Being Black in Canada. All the partners want to make sure the program, which is the largest mentorship and training program for Black filmmakers, continues and gets bigger and is sustainable. Desiardins also became a co-presenter of the Montreal International Black Film Festival, the largest Black film festival in North America. For the first time, it was completely online and available internationally.

Continued on next page.



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woman in that role. In our

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when you are trying to do

Fabienne Colas, President

and CEO of the Fabienne

something quickly.

Colas Foundation

This is always helpful

The moment COVID-19

was declared a global pan-

demic: When (on March 19)

Cirque du Soleil announced

it had cancelled all of its

shows and was laying off

thousands of people, that

was the world coming to an

end for the entertainment

industry. I started to talk to

my admin people about cash

flow, expenses, what can we

wisdom.

cut?

Congratulations, Jeffrey W Clarke

2020 Honouree of **CANADA'S TOP 40 UNDER 40®**

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'You just need to get through the panic'

Lessons

Everything is figure-outable. You just need to go through the panic, then pick yourself up, step back and analyze. I also learned it's so easy to make change. People always say change is so hard, change takes time. Change happens the minute you say 'let's do this.' It's as easy as taking a decision. That's the same when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Everybody knows diversity is important. Inclusion is a choice; you need to decide to be inclusive.

Ravinder and Manjit Minhas, co-funders Minhas Breweries, Distilleries and Wineries

The moment COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic:

Ravinder A provincial liquor board president asked to have a call at 9:30 p.m. along with (representatives of) a couple of regional health authorities. We were told hand sanitizer reserves were down to 30 per cent and could run out in six weeks. They asked for a couple of million bottles.

Rapid response

Ravinder We worked with Health Canada and gained approval within 72 hours. Five days after the call we started producing hand sanitizer. We shut down our facility for 11 weeks and went to our bottle houses and used every bottle under the sun so we could get it to essential services. We have the most amazing teams and they took it as a thing of pride we were going to help Canada through this. We asked the health authorities for their learnings on how to keep everybody safe. We couldn't get personal protective equipment so we had staff in China source medical grade PPE and FedEx them here.

Making a difference

Ravinder We've produced 15 million containers of hand sanitizer and we haven't stopped. The same health authorities asked for help getting gloves, thermometers, face shields, face masks, children's masks. Because we got them for our own staff, we were in a good position. Our overseas staff sent over samples to a Canadian lab, and a staff member supervised production for an entire week. Our message: manufacturing needs to occur in Canada because it's what will allow us to be self-reliant. COVID-19 has really highlighted that.

Manjit We tapped into our friends at Air Canada and Cargojet for help. That's how we brought two million face shields, three million childrens' masks and 10,000 thermometers to Canada. We will be coming out with alcohol wipes too because there is a huge shortage.

Lessons

Manjit This was a journey that we all went into blind and it was important we all asked for help. You have to focus on the step in front of you, not the whole staircase. Looking at the entire pivot is overwhelming, not only for one individual but for an organization. It's more important than ever to be positive, to be a leader who reflects the fact things are going to be okay. And if they're not, we're going to learn.

Dr. Ana Andreazza, Associate Professor, Departments of Pharmacology & Toxicology and Psychiatry at the University of Toronto

The moment COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic: I was in Cuba with my family for March break. I received a call on March



Clockwise from top: Dr. Ana Andreazza, Fabienne Colas and Manjit Minhas. SUPPLIED

12 from my chair saying we would have to close our lab. We study how energy metabolism is associated with neural transmission and how that impacts bipolar disorder, major depression and schizophrenia. We do clinical trials, cell life studies. You can't tell the cells you have to wait. We're thankful that we were given an exemption that allowed us to continue working. Most of my lab — about 17 people — all started to work from home, except for three of us. All the planning happened over a virtual call from Cuba.

Rapid response

Since 2014 my lab has studied a pathway that triggers inflammation in the brain of patients with bipolar disorder. In April, I realized this is exactly the same pathway that can trigger inflammation in the lungs of patients with COVID-19. We had a natural product, the acai berry, we were testing to see if it could decrease inflammation of the brain. What if it could decrease inflammation of the lungs? My chair connected me with Dr. Michael Farkouh, a clinical scientist. He liked

the idea and we started a trial. **Making a difference**

We are recruiting patients who tested positive for COVID and can be treated at home. Our hypothesis is because you are increasing your immune system (with the berry extract), the virus has less chance to start a large cascade of inflammation. Your lungs are more protected. We're not going to cure you but you're probably not going to need to go to the hospital. That's the hope of the trial: we can keep you healthier and home while you recover.

recover

Lessons I had to figure out how to deal with adjustment. That all of us adjust in different ways. We had to become more understanding of each other. We all started meeting three times a week over Zoom. By sharing how difficult it was for me, it encouraged everyone to be vulnerable. We learned quickly to be more kind and understanding to each other, to carefully listen. We excelled as a group during this time, publishing more papers than we had when we were all working together in person.



NATIONAL POST, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2020



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Congratulations on being named one of Canada's Top 40 under 40®, Mark!



Mark Thompson

Executive Vice President, Chief Corporate Development and Strategy Officer





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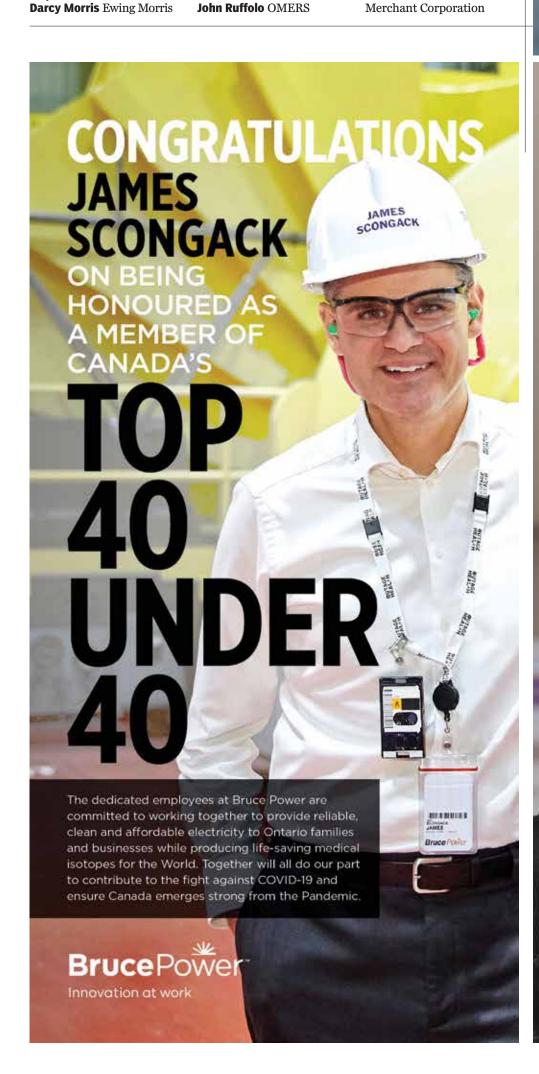
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HOW DO YOU LEAD IN A CRISIS?

Canada's Top 40 Under 40 honourees share how they navigated the pandemic

MARY TERESA BITTI Postmedia Content Works

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The next day businesses and organizations across the world had to change their processes and operational models to keep their people, customers and stakeholders safe. Here we share how four of this year's Canada's Top 40 Under 40 honourees pivoted, innovated and helped their organizations and communities during the pandemic.

Stacey Gallatly, Director General, Western Growth Strategy, for Western **Economic Diversification**

Before the pandemic monitoring and communichanged everything, Stacey Gallatly and her team were tasked with setting up the Western Canada Growth Strategy. Their mandate was to consider what growth and impact across many aspects of the Western economy could look like. "Our strategy focuses on diversification, trade, communities and skills across the Western economy, which is itself very diverse," says Gallatly. "When the pandemic started to crystallize, we were asked, 'How do we mobilize and get on top of this quick-

On Feb. 21, she sent her first email with the word COVID in it. And on March 4, she took on the role of Western Economic Diversification Canada's executive point on COVID-19 co-ordination,



Stacey Gallatly, left, and Andrew Oliver. SUPPLIED

cating the many varied and quickly evolving impacts of COVID-19 on the western economy.

"My team was a bit of a sweet spot because we have individuals who know how to think about complexity, how to think about things in big ways, who are eager, ready to move." Gallatly's own background managing through $disaster-she\ redesigned\ the$ disaster recovery program in Alberta during the worst flooding in the province's history in 2013 - would help inform her leadership through the pandemic. "I was able to use that experience to think about what to expect."

The team was quickly deployed wherever it was needed to make sure they had eyes on how things were evolving. Gallatly was tapped to co-lead the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF). Within about two weeks, they had established a suite of programs to support businesses struggling to keep their employees, pay rent and utilities, and manage cash flow during the pandemic. Gallatly stayed on to lead the administration of

the program. To date, more than 2,400 businesses across Western Canada that were not able to access existing COVID-19 relief measures have received more than \$150 million in support from the RRRF, protecting more than 10,000 jobs. "There's a moment between response and recovery when unpredictable opportunities open up but only if you're able to let go of what the world looked like before."

says Gallatly. "When I'm in that moment, I try to think about how to build the space for innovation and how to rally folks to think about how to build back better."

Andrew Oliver, President & CEO, Oliver & Bonacini **Hospitality Oliver & Bonacini Hospitality (O&B)**

"The impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry has been devastating. In our 30-plus years in business, we've never had to deal with a crisis like COVID-19,' says Andrew Oliver, president and CEO of Oliver & Bonacini (O&B), the restaurant company he has helped grow into Canada's largest event producer. He took swift action to pivot operations and to lobby all levels of government to support the industry.

On March 16, Oliver proactively shut down all of O&B's restaurants and event venues across four provinces, which required him to temporarily lay off almost his entire workforce. He immediately consolidated the kitchens' fresh produce and pantry items to deliver to employees in need. Then

business back up. He quickly got takeout and delivery up and running and launched an online grocery delivery platform that in the early weeks of the pandemic also made available hand sanitizer, disposable masks and gloves.

he got to work building the

Positive customer response led to the creation of a new "O&B at Home" sub-brand. Oliver also pivoted the events side of the business, transitioning to catering small-scale celebrations, serving corporate clients in their homes and offering virtual cooking classes as team-building activities. "We are confident in 2021, 2022 we will get back to our outsized growth rate," says

As he was transitioning his business, Oliver teamed up with John Sinopoli (Ascari Hospitality Group) to form Save Hospitality, a coalition of more than 75,000 workers and operators, to lobby all three levels of government for industry support and reform. Oliver was also invited to give testimony on the impacts of COVID-19 on the industry and share recommendations to improve the effectiveness of relief measures before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

Oliver has been equally focused on the broader community. O&B teamed up with RBC as a founding member of Canada United, a movement to kickstart the recovery of local economies and small businesses. His own teams in Toronto and Montreal donated more than 6,500 meals to hospitals and shelters and raised money to help kids in high-need neighbourhoods in Toronto.

"The importance of being able to give back to our community became even stronger throughout this crisis," says Oliver, who personally donated tens of thousands of disposable gloves to Sunnybrook Hospital.

Continued on next page.



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Shifting gears in the midst of a global crisis

Ghassan Halazon, founder and CEO of EMERGE Commerce Inc.

Ecommerce was already on the rise when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the world to shelter in place. Restrictions to slow its spread accelerated that growth, making the online marketplace an economic bright spot.

This has certainly been the case for EMERGE Commerce, which is thriving in adversity. "As an acquirer and operator of niche e-commerce sites, we were fortunate to be a benefactor of this rapid shift to online shopping," says founder and CEO Ghassan Halazon. "We also took this opportunity to drive real, lasting change in preparation of this new world shead."

world ahead." EMERGE realized the benefits of its diversified e-commerce portfolio, which reduced its risk and allowed the company to focus on pandemic-resilient markets such as groceries, while pushing pause on markets that were directly impacted by the pandemic, such as experiences and travel. The result: the business achieved 177 per cent growth in gross sales during the second quarter, allowing it to retain its entire full-time staff and make additional hires.

To further secure the company's position, Halazon also temporarily cut executive, board and advisory compensation. "COVID-19 made us realize that nothing is set in stone. As a wartime CEO,

my main job was to test the limits of what we could do to give our business extra breathing room during a time of such immense uncertainty."

In May, EMERGE announced plans to go public and embarked on an entirely virtual investor roadshow, upending traditional in-person fundraising. "If you told me in March that we would be able to raise \$10 million entirely virtually during the most devastating macro event of the last 100 years, I would have thought vou were out of your mind. It was a bet that investors were ready to invest online, and we were luckily right," says

As it continued its track record of growth and profitability, EMERGE donated hundreds of masks to Unity Health and supplied thousands of affordable non-medical grade masks to its Canadian consumers. The company also took a strong stand in support of Black Lives Matter, and donated to the Centre for Young Black Professionals, a Toronto-based charity dedicated to address economic and social barriers that affect Black youth.

Véronique Lecault, Chief Operating Officer, AbCellera Biologics

When the first COVID-19 case in North America was confirmed, AbCellera Biologics found itself in a unique position to help solve the crisis by generating a





Ghassan Halazon, left, and Véronique Lecault. SUPPLIED

potential antibody therapy. It had already been working with the U.S. Defence Department's research arm, DARPA, adapting its antibody discovery technology for rapid pandemic scenarios. The platform had been tested twice in the previous two years in simulated pandemic scenarios to generate antibody countermeasures. "We quickly mobilized," says Véronique Lecault, Chief Operating Officer, AbCellera Biologics.

In late February, AbCellera received the first available sample in North America from a patient who had

recovered from COVID-19. From there, it was an allhands-on-deck effort. Ab-Cellera screened more than five million immune cells, identified more than 500 unique human antibody sequences, and entered into a co-development agreement with Eli Lilly and Company. Only 23 days after receiving the sample, the top 24 antibody candidates with the ability to neutralize the virus were identified. LY-CoV555, the lead molecule from this discovery campaign, was the world's first monoclonal antibody against SARS-CoV-2 to enter human clin-

ical trials. While it typically takes years to bring a new therapy to a Phase I trial, Ab-Cellera and its partners did it in only three months, setting a new precedent in the industry.

industry.

"While the world was slowing down, AbCellera had to accelerate. Every day mattered, as it could translate into thousands of lives saved," says Lecault. "As COO, it was my responsibility to adapt the way we work to prevent the spread of COVID-19, keep the team healthy both physically and mentally, all while operating at maximum speed."

This required keeping up with the latest provincial health guidelines, providing daily updates, switching to work-from-home for office workers, putting in place safety measures in the lab so the team could continue its important work and organizing company-wide virtual town halls to stay connected.

"It has been a privilege to be part of this incredible team effort and a source of pride to see a technology developed in Canada have such a profound impact in the fight against COVID-19," says Lecault.



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