

## **For the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Business Transfer Awards, PwC Canada is pleased to honour six outstanding Quebec-based companies**

Montreal, June 19, 2023 – Once again this year, PwC Canada is celebrating the dynamic nature of business succession under the auspices of the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Business Transfer Awards (Les Médaillés de la relève).

### **Honouring resilience**

The Business Transfer Awards, created in Quebec by PwC Canada in 2006, are designed to celebrate Quebec companies that have successfully completed their succession process, in particular by maintaining their long-term viability. The Awards also help to promote local companies by showcasing the commitment of the next generation.

To mark the occasion, some 200 people gathered at Montreal's Hotel Windsor on June 6. The honorary president of the event, Marie-Claude Houle, President and CEO of EBC Inc., joined the attendees to honour Quebec companies that successfully completed their business succession process. The judging panels were presided over by Martin Deschênes, Board Vice-Chair of Groupe Deschênes Inc., in the Family Transfer Category, and by Claude Auchu, Partner and CEO of Ig2, in the Entrepreneurial Transfer Category.

During entrepreneurial or family transfers, bringing in a new management team poses a daunting challenge to entrepreneurial success and expansion. Six companies from Quebec's business community were honoured this year.

“Successfully transferring a business is a major accomplishment that requires huge amounts of energy and open-mindedness. Kudos to this year's medalists for having risen to the challenge so brilliantly. Their success confirms that, despite the current climate of economic and geopolitical uncertainty, it is still possible to carry out cutting-edge transactions,” said Christine Pouliot, Partner, Deals Private Leader in Quebec, PwC Canada.

“Entrepreneurial transfers are the future of our companies. You have to be determined to take over the reins of an existing firm and you have to be passionate to take things to the next level. I am delighted to be presiding over the 2023 edition of the Business Transfer Awards with a view to supporting family and entrepreneurial business transfers and to underscoring their perseverance, hard work and success,” said Marie-Claude Houle, President and CEO of EBC, and Honorary President of the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Awards.

### Family Transfer Category

#### **Gold medalist: Oberson**

Alexandra Oberson, President  
Daniel L'Écuyer, Vice-President

Maurice Oberson founded his first ski shop in 1963 and watched as his team grew to over 200 employees. The succession process undertaken with his daughter Alexandra and his business

partner Daniel L'Écuyer unfolded carefully and patiently over a period of nearly five years, from 2015 to 2020. Having held a series of operational and managerial positions, Alexandra knows the company inside-out and is prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. "We are always seeking to customize our client offer, to keep on growing outside Quebec and to use our company's leverage to contribute to our community," she said.

**Silver medalist: Cuisine Idéale**

Jean-Bernard Gagnon, President  
Pierre-Yves Gagnon, Vice-President, General Manager

From 2015 to 2021, Yves Gagnon gradually relinquished control over his company, which manufactures top-of-the-line made-to-order kitchen cabinets, to his sons Jean-Bernard and Pierre-Yves. "Quebec is renowned for its furniture manufacturing expertise, and we are pleased to be protecting and evolving this know-how by overseeing the company's long-term viability," explained the two brothers. Today, their products are available at over 200 retail outlets in North America, including various high-end boutiques, as well as a brand-new store in Mirabel. With the rise of the new generation, the team has expanded to 330 employees, and its sustained growth prospects remain promising.

**Bronze medalist: Groupe Marie Claire**

Sylvain Lafrance, President  
Martin Lafrance, Vice-President  
Stéphanie Lafrance, Director

Initially a women's clothing boutique founded by Réal Lafrance and his wife Marie-Claire in 1965, Groupe Marie Claire now has a network of 300 retail outlets operating under various banners, including Dans Un Jardin, Boutiques San Francisco, Boutiques Marie Claire, Claire France, Grenier, Brandnlogo and Livøm. The next-generation transfer to the couple's three children—Sylvain, Martin and Stéphanie—was carried out over five years, from 2017 to 2021, drawing on their more than two decades of first-hand business experience. As was the case for their parents, the next generation intends to safeguard the company's legacy and pursue the next level of growth. They will also be carrying out new projects according to the watchwords of passion, know-how, sound management and resilience.

Entrepreneurial Transfer Category

**Gold medalist: Chez Ashton restaurants**

Émily Adam, Co-President and CEO  
Jean-Christophe Lirette, Co-President and CEO

From its beginnings as a snack bar acquired by Ashton Leblond in 1969, the Ashton brand now encompasses 23 restaurants and employs 650 people. An entrepreneurial couple had dreams of taking over the business, and these plans finally came to fruition 10 years later in 2022. "We want to honour the past and inspire the future," noted Jean-Christophe Lirette, Co-President and CEO. After reviewing the company's processes and modernizing the brand, the duo hopes to open new restaurants each year. "People want an Ashton in their town," said Émily Adam, Co-President and CEO.

### **Silver medalist: Novatech**

Karl Corriveau, President  
Frédéric Verges, Director, Client Experience  
Matthew Welland, Vice-President, Sales  
Jean-Christophe Arènes, Vice-President, Sales and Service  
Stuart Simmonds, Vice-President, Business Development  
François Godin, Director, Finance

Founded in 1986, Novatech Analytical Solutions is recognized for distributing and integrating personalized analytical instrumentation solutions. Intrapreneurship lies at the heart of its business culture, with key employees having opportunities to join the ranks of the shareholders. A management buyout, concluded in 2021, involved a private investor and six employees (Frédéric Verges, Matthew Welland, Karl Corriveau, Jean-Christophe Arènes, Stuart Simmonds and François Godin). “This buyout aligns with the company’s values and makes the succession possible thanks to people who care about its success,” explained Karl Corriveau, President of Novatech.

### **Bronze medalist: Satellite Metal**

Alexandre Masse, Co-Owner  
Sylvain Beaudet, Co-Owner

Founded in 1973 by the Sirkin family, Satellite Metal specializes in die manufacturing and maintenance, in addition to stamping and assembling complex metal parts. The duo formed by Alexandre Masse and Sylvain Beaudet undertook a structured acquisition process before setting their sights on Satellite Metal in 2021. “Our priorities were to invest in employee well-being and to enhance the sales process and client service,” they said. In 2022, they completed the acquisition of Mabo Metal, in an example of vertical integration. “All thanks to Howard Sirkin, who ensured that the transition was problem-free.”

PwC Canada and its partners—National Bank, Fasken, Fonds de solidarité FTQ, La Presse, Familles en affaires-HEC Montréal and Koze—extend their congratulations to all the medalists for this 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Business Transfer Awards. For further information, please visit: <https://lesmedaillesdelareleve.com/en/>

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