

Salah J. Bachir CM. O.Ont (He/Him)

Chair, Phamous Characters

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[Wikipedia](#)

Salah Bachir is a successful entrepreneur, executive, publisher, producer, author, and patron of the arts. He has created and built several successful businesses and set up some of the most creative and innovative programs in the media and sponsorship worlds. He has used the same passion and drive, along with his extensive network, to become one of Canada's most outstanding fundraisers and philanthropists, helping to raise hundreds of millions of dollars for public health causes, the arts, diversity and inclusion, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, social justice, and more. His fundraising efforts have made him a founder of St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto.

He is also the author of *First to Leave the Party: My Life with Ordinary People ...Who Happen to Be Famous*, his memoir, which was released by Penguin Random House on October 17, 2023. The book was an instant national bestseller and is the first book to include pronouns on the front cover.

He is the recipient of both the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, in recognition of "his leadership as an entrepreneur and for his commitment to the arts and to social justice." He was inducted into the Canadian Film and Television Hall of Fame in 2017.

Business and entrepreneurship

A pioneer in the home video business and publishing and digital media, Bachir developed some of the most profitable strategies in targeted media, and has published some of the most recognized magazine brands in Canada, including *Premiere*, *Famous Magazine*, *Famous Quebec* and *Famous Kids*, *Cineplex Magazine*, *Cineplex Quebec*, and *Star Cineplex* — magazines that were all leading publications in their field, with *Famous* and *Cineplex* magazines consistently among the top 5 most read in Canada and Quebec and *Cineplex Magazine* achieving the number 1 spot with more than 4.3 million readers per issue. He also owned a creative and marketing agency, as well as a production and editing suite. He helped launch several major video brands in Canada, including *Vestron*, *Disney*, *Sony*, and *Universal*, and operated a national digital and video trade show for 15 years.

As co-owner of *Famous Players Media*, and later as President of *Cineplex Media*, Bachir revolutionized the cinema advertising industry through his early adoption of digital technology and his foresight in leveraging that technology to produce unique content and advertising that was delivered to audiences based on specific demographic data. He also monetized the physical space of the theatres with state-of-the-art digital technology.

Since founding *Famous Players Media* in 1999 — a partnership with *Viacom* and *Famous Players Theatres* — Bachir's media subsidiaries have consistently performed as the most profitable corporate division, often delivering over 35 percent of EBITDA, and grew sixfold from 1999 to 2019. In 2019 revenue exceeded \$150 million, with 90 people in 6 offices across Canada.

Scene and Scotiabank

Bachir further revolutionized the movie theatre business when he brought *Cineplex Media* a unique multi-year, multi-pronged partnership with *Scotiabank* that included the *Scene Loyalty Program*, the first of its kind in the film world, along with a multi-million-dollar exclusive advertising deal. *Scotiabank* also renamed 10 *Cineplex* locations and sponsored the *VIP* theatres.

Today, the *Scene+* program has more than 12 million members, has expanded to include *Sobeys* and *Home Hardware*, and is currently valued at over \$1.5 billion. Both *Cineplex* and *Scotiabank* attribute a huge increase in brand equity, loyalty, and inroads to a younger demographic audience to the success of these programs.

Board work

Bachir was a founding member in 1987 of the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research (CANFAR) and served on its board for over 25 years. He is also the Chancellor Emeritus of *Ontario College of Art & Design University (OCADU)* and a former member of the university's board of trustees. He was a member of its board of governors,

senate, and President's Advisory Council, and chaired the honorary degrees and teaching awards selection committees.

Additionally, Salah has served and sat on numerous boards including The Canadian Film Centre; The Canadian Motion Pictures Distributors Association; the Art Gallery of Ontario; the Museum of Contemporary Art; The Variety Club of Ontario; the Inside Out Film and Video Festival; the Waladi Children's Foundation; Reel World Film Festival; the board of Business for the Arts; and on the board of the Luminato Festival, where he was a founding luminary.

As a board member for the Variety Club of Ontario, he received its highest honour, the Heart Award, in 1995, and was the inspiration for the Salah Bachir Leadership Award. While serving on the board of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), he was also given its highest award, the MOCA Award in Contemporary Art. The Art Gallery of Ontario has referred to Bachir "one of our greatest partners, a community builder, a true partner in bringing people together with art. He's been a new founder, co-chaired several of our galas, sponsored major exhibitions and helped us to build this remarkable Gehry building."

Bachir is a founder of St Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto and special consultant of the current \$1.5 billion capital campaign to build a new hospital wing. He is an honorary lifetime patron of the 519 — a world-renowned hub of support and service for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. He is also a consultant and one of the chairs of the Woodland Cultural Centre capital campaign committee at the Six Nations near Brantford. The Woodland Cultural Centre serves to promote Indigenous art, culture, and history.

In 2024 Bachir was appointed to the National Council of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), a human rights organization committed to defending the rights, dignity, safety, and freedoms of all people in Canada.

Fundraising and philanthropy

Using his vast network of business friends and clients, Bachir has raised hundreds of millions of dollars to advance the arts, human rights, and social justice causes. The International Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) gave him their International Volunteer Award in 2017. AFP President and CEO Jason Lee calls him "an extraordinary volunteer, donor and fundraiser."

Bachir has received many awards for humanitarianism, volunteerism, and entrepreneurship, and has received several lifetime achievement awards. He also has several lifetime achievement awards from the 2SLGBTQ+ community, including Canada's LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce; Out on Bay Street's Leaders to Be Proud Of; Lifetime Achievement Award from Pride Toronto, and he has twice been Grand Marshall of the Annual Pride Parade.

His many other accolades include The Canadian Centre for Diversity's Human Relations Award (2012), and awards from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Human Rights Watch, and a humanitarian award from Paramount Pictures in 1992 for his advocacy and activism in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Bachir has numerous rooms named after him and his husband, Jacob Yerex, and their families, in healthcare and the arts, including two dialysis clinics and The Salah J. Bachir New Media Wall at the Image Centre at Toronto Metropolitan University, one of the world's leading photography and art museums, created in 2012 as a tribute to his innovation in the media world. He also has rooms named for him at several Canadian art museums, including the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Education

Salah studied at the University of Waterloo. In addition to being the fourth Chancellor of the Ontario College of Arts and Design University (OCADU), he currently holds five honorary doctorates for his dedication to diversity, human rights, and the arts: York University, 2015; Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson), 2015; University of Alberta, 2016; OCAD, 2017; and Wilfrid Laurier University, 2022.

"Salah Bachir is the biggest hearted philanthropist with the rock star life."

Elton John and David Furnish

“Salah co-owned Famous Players Media with Famous Players Paramount and Viacom. Salah is innovative and passionate and a great leader and motivator. Salah champions diversity and inclusion in everything he does. It has never been an afterthought. People want to work and be associated with him. And best of all, he always over-delivered from the very first month we were in business together.”

John Bailey *President and CEO of Famous Players Theatres*

"I am in constant awe of you. You don't hesitate to say what you believe to those in power, and to those who most need to hear the truth. You always do what is right even when it's hard to do. We could all use a bit of your courage, a bit of your belief in ourselves and a lot more of your flair! Congrats on your book. The stories of your experiences are incredible. Your purpose is inspiring and meaningful to all who most need a voice."

Arlene Dickinson, *Business Executive, Author and TV dragon*

"I've never met anyone like Salah Bachir. He's generous in every way and encourages others to be generous as well. His beneficence is incredible and our patients at St. Joseph's receive better care thanks to him. Salah Bachir has improved care for so many people who use St. Joseph's Health Centre. He's single-handedly raised the funds needed to create a new dialysis centre and transform a second one, in addition to supporting many other areas of care. His support can be felt in every corridor of our hospital."

Maria Dyck, *President and CEO, St. Joseph's Health Centre Foundation*

"Salah is one of the most extraordinary people I have ever worked with. He has absolute clarity of vision, enormous drive, and the ability to marshal those around him to achieve the desired goal. He makes deep, lasting connections with people from all walks of life. I have never seen Salah fail at anything he has attempted - and some of his goals have been audacious. Put simply, he is an inspiration."

Nancy Lockhart, *Director, Choice Properties REIT; Director, George Weston Limited; Former CEO, Frum Development Corp*

"I've known Salah for almost thirty years and over that time have worked on a wide variety of board committees and fundraising committees and always found Salah the most innovative and articulate leader in these discussions. He is very smart, very focused on the end objective and always inclusive and thoughtful in his advice and leadership. Salah would be my choice on any situation dealing with challenging issues. He is particularly a value-added because he always has an innovative and practical approach, undoubtedly stemming from his years as a successful entrepreneur."

Andy Pringle, *President, Principal – RPIA & Former Toronto Polices Services Board Chair*

"Salah is swift to get to the issues and brilliant with the solutions. We've worked on many projects together and especially proud of how together (Scotiabank and Cineplex) we created and launched the Scene Loyalty Program. There are no half measures with Salah - if it's worth doing, then his MO is to crush it. And he's an excellent mentor."

Rick White, *Former Vice President Marketing, Scotiabank, Chief Marketing Officer, Stronach group*