

Mutualism and Cooperation

TOHU (Cité des arts du cirque de Montréal)

SSQ is the main partner of TOHU – one of the world's most impressive centres for training, production and performance of the circus arts. Below are excerpts taken from a speech given by Richard Bell, CEO of SSQ Financial Group, at the official launch of TOHU on August 17, 2004. In his speech, Mr. Bell shares his thoughts on SSQ's decision to back the TOHU project:

“What was needed was faith... And SSQ Financial Group was there and dared to believe in TOHU! Yes, making the decision to partner with TOHU required a certain amount of faith and conviction:

- to believe in the project when nothing existed here but empty space between a highway and an abandoned landfill;
- to believe in the project when it existed only on paper and in the minds of those initiating the project;
- to believe in the project when TOHU's promoters welcomed us to their, shall we say 'very modest offices.'

Yes, all of this took faith... but it was easy for SSQ to have faith in TOHU because we believed in what TOHU wanted to accomplish! This is due in large part to the 'go-get 'em' attitude of Charles-Mathieu Brunell and his team. I would like to thank them all for their vision and their infectious enthusiasm. But, above all, SSQ believed in this project because of its lofty ambitions related to environmental protection and promotion of sustainable development; revitalization of an entire neighbourhood through the creation of free and accessible public green space; and the promotion of the arts. *Espace SSQ* will serve as a showplace for avant-garde shows and help new artists looking to create a name for themselves.

Actually, believing in TOHU took the same kind of faith that men and women had 60 years ago when they believed that SSQ could help improve the quality of life of their community. And today, our financial group is proud to have believed in TOHU right from the very start, and to have been at their side through thick and thin, to share in this very exciting adventure.

Today, with the official opening of this wonderful building, we are celebrating the more visible, tangible aspect of TOHU. However, TOHU is also an organization with a strong sense of social consciousness and community that falls solidly in line with the values SSQ has steadfastly upheld throughout the years.”

Ève Giard
Senior Management
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