

## **Elevate Announcement - Transcript**

### **July 29, 2020**

Lisa Zarzeczny - Hello everyone and thank you so much for joining us first thing on your Wednesday morning. My name is Lisa Zarzeczny and I am one of the Co-Founders and the Vice President of Programming and Operations here at Elevate and I'm so excited to be bringing our community together. I'm going to be your host for today's show. And over the next hour, we've got a star studded lineup. We're going to tell you our plans for the 2020 festival, unveil what is sure to be one of the most exciting Elevate announcements to date, about Elevate 2.0 and our future and how we're really passionate and excited to partner together with the community to accomplish some really big things. Elevate started in 2017 as a passion project, and almost overnight, it seemed to grow into a national movement. We had the wind at our backs. We were gearing up for the fourth annual festival that promised to be bigger and better than ever when Covid hit.

It was like the floor fell out from underneath us. Whereas before bringing 30,000 people together, an event seemed like an incredible thing overnight, no longer was that not only desirable, it was illegal, but there's this saying that great companies come out of bad times. And for us that's been so true because it's forced us to focus on the things that really matter. And well, I'm so excited to share with you what's on the horizon for Elevate.

First, I want to update our community that we're canceling the 2020 festival. The health and safety of our communities are way too important to experiment with any live event in any capacity come fall. We'll revisit hosting live events when we know it's safe to do so, but if you'll indulge me for just a moment before we get to our big announcement, I'd like to take a moment to reflect the idea for Elevate came at a time when Toronto's tech sector was taking off, we were seeing record levels of funding, growth and innovation, but there was nothing that was celebrating this or drawing attention to it on a global stage.

The first meeting I attended was with all of Elevate's co-founders, and I'll always remember Razor being at the whiteboard, mapping out the plans for the first festival. And I can testify to the fact from that from day one, Michelle Obama, as the headliner was the vision. But what I remembered was just being so taken aback by the bold aspirations that all of the co-founders had their vision for Elevate and what they wanted to create for Canada's tech sector. And I wasn't the only one from the beginning, Elevate captivated the community. And from there onwards, everything we did just seemed to take off from the first launch event that we ever hosted. The world's highest launch event with Mayor John Tory at the CN tower, where we accidentally forgot to put a cap on the registration. And within 24 hours, we were oversubscribed. And that first event was standing room only.

We had only 95 days to plan the first festival. And we were only able to do it because we brought 95 partners together to help us co-create all of the different events that would take place that week. It was truly made by the community for the community. And over the years, we

welcomed the world's best to the Elevate Mainstage; former first lady, Michelle Obama, Martha Stewart, Akon, Scott Galloway, Kara Swisher, Whitney Wolfe Herd to our own Masai Ujiri, Tobi Lutke, Geoffrey Hinton and Shahrzad Rafati, the list can go on and on. We also partnered with over 500 organizations. We connected startups with both investors and corporates through Elevator Pitch, the Investor Zone and Corporate Buyers Zone. And we also connected job seekers with tech companies who are looking for qualified talent through new co and startup open house. And in my opinion, we hosted some of the best parties, socials and networking events at Elevate King West with Brooklyn Heights, Wyclef John, and Majid Jordan performing.

And for those joining us this morning that are in the events space, you know, all about those behind the scenes moments that no one else notices like two hours before he was supposed to appear for his keynote on the main stage, getting a call from Al Gore and being told that his plane had been grounded in New York and having to go and convince the CEO of Google Eric Schmidt to deliver an impromptu fireside chat on the main stage to buy us some time, or like when we picked up Akon from the airport, and the first thing he wanted to do in Toronto was to go to the Eaton Centre to buy a crisp white shirt. Or one of my other favorites was when Guy Kawasaki, they ever hustler that he is, snuck backstage and waited outside Martha Stewart's dressing room so he could interview her for his podcast, remarkable people.

And over all of that, Elevate grew exponentially from 4,000 people at our first festival to 9,000 people in 2018 to over 30,000 people at last year's event, making us the fastest growing tech and innovation festival. Elevate was born out of the need to champion Canada's tech and innovation sector. But with a global pandemic wreaking havoc around the globe, the world's needs have changed. And will, I'm confident to say that one day when it's safe to do so, we will host massive events. Again, they might look very different than what we've been used to for anyone who's purchased tickets to the 2020 festival rest assured you'll receive a full refund, but here's what I want to propose. Instead, we want to encourage ticket holders to direct proceeds to four organizations that are working to dismantle systemic racism and advance black indigenous and people of color in our communities.

The Jean Augustine Center is dedicated to ensuring that all girls and young women have access to empowerment programs. It's looking to become a center of excellence in youth STEM, but it needs funding support to get there. Get real is a homegrown not-for-profit focused on combating discrimination against people who identify as two spirit or LGBTQ. They're all about promoting acceptance, unity and compassion. The Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund is creating a path toward reconciliation between indigenous and non indigenous peoples in Canada, through awareness, education, and action. And finally, the Black Health Alliance, a community led charity working to improve the health and wellbeing of black communities across Canada, through systems, change, research and policy work. As part of our commitment, we're going to match every donation so that we double the impact. Any tickets for which a refund is not requested before August 31st will automatically be donated to these organizations, hit this link for more information [www.elevate.ca/faq](http://www.elevate.ca/faq).

In a world where hosting meetings, networking and live events is no longer possible, we're all quickly trying to figure out how to navigate in this new digital space. But what we keep hearing from our partners is that you're all still experiencing pain points. You're all still trying to figure out how to connect to community, how to drive brand awareness and how to generate sales and lead gen. The Elevate team quickly pivoted to producing world-class digital products. And I knew we were onto something truly special when after an episode of Elevate live, the Kara Swisher called me up and said, I need to connect you with Vox media. This is the Vox media, the leaders in content production. And she said, they need to learn exactly what you did because we need to ramp up our digital productions. And that was world-class if you've missed it, here's what we've been up to.

At Elevate, we've been fortunate to receive funding and support from all three levels of government, but it was because of the city of Toronto that Elevate got green lit in the first place. Mayor Tory has been one of the strongest advocates for Toronto's tech and innovation ecosystem. And at Elevate he's been one of our biggest supporters. He even has the matching Elevate jacket to prove it. He's spoken at every Elevate event that we've ever asked him to. And we've also hosted him on numerous global delegations, visiting tech hubs in Austin and Lisbon. I'm now so excited to welcome our next guest mayor, John Tory.

Mayor John Tory - Hi, Mayor John Tory here. It's been an incredible three years since Elevate first launched and a lot has happened in those three years as the world's fastest growing tech festival. Elevate grew from 4,000 guests in the first year to over 30,000, only two years later. You know, it was the summer of 2017, I remember Razor came to me with an idea for a multi day tech festival in September, and I assumed he meant the following year, but in fact, he meant three months later. And not surprisingly, when it comes to Razor, the veteran, you get to know him, they pulled it off in that first year. And Elevate has only continued to grow that year. Toronto's tech companies created nearly 30,000 jobs, more than the Bay area, Seattle and Washington DC combined. We needed a home grown event to not only to celebrate that kind of growth of our city's tech and innovation sector, but to amplify and bring attention to the sector.

Elevate did just that. With the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizers have had to cancel or postpone their events in the interest of public health and public safety. And I commend Elevate for doing the responsible thing and canceling this year's festival. And so that means I won't have an opportunity to wear my Elevate blazer this year, but I look forward to wearing the blazer and the opportunity to get together again in person when it is once again, safe to do so. I know the future of Elevate is in very good hands. And speaking of which I would now like to pass things off to Razor to tell us a little bit more about what's next for Elevate.

Razor Suleman - Thank you Mayor Tory, Elevate would not have happened without your continued guidance and support. I remember that meeting at your office when I, and many of the leaders from our ecosystem came in and shared our vision of telling Toronto and Canada's

story on a global stage. We're so grateful for your support. And I know I can speak on behalf of all Torontonians, when I say how grateful we are to you for the leadership you've provided during this difficult crisis.

So the moment we've all been waiting for, today's big announcement. You know, many of you may recall when Design Exchange Chair Christopher Wein, Mayor Tory, and I made an announcement on the Elevate Main Stage this past year, announcing that we were bringing the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals right here to Canada and that Elevate and the DX would be the Canadian headquarters. Well, today we're going to tell you about our first initiative. I'm so excited to be launching with you today. The Elevate Social Innovation Exchange also known as ElevateSIX. So many of you may be wondering what is a social innovation exchange and why is it important now? Well, let me take you back over this last year. In August of 2019, the leaders of almost 200 of the biggest companies on the planet, including Apple, Amazon, Cisco made a commitment that they would focus on purpose over profit, that they would steer their organizations to focus on stakeholder capitalism and not shareholder capitalism.

They declared the end of an era where companies' sole purpose was to focus on maximizing shareholder profit, often at the expense of employees, customers, and their community. Next, we saw this global trend continue at Davos Switzerland in January, 2020. When we saw our political leaders from around the world gather at Davos whose theme was stakeholder capitalism and sustainability. They all agreed that the path we are on is not conducive to a sustainable future and that all of us need to do our parts from our government officials to our corporate CEOs, to everyday citizens like you and I, if we want to create a better, more sustainable future. And the third trend that we've been following happened earlier this year when Larry Fink, the CEO of BlackRock committed that his firm, the world's largest asset manager with over 7.4 trillion dollars of capital, which is four times the GDP of Canada would only make investments in companies that were doing sustainable things. No longer would BlackRock invest in companies that produced coal power, but instead they would shift their focus on companies that were producing clean, renewable energy.

He believed that companies had a purpose of doing not only well, but doing good. And so, when the team at Elevate and our passionate board were observing these macro trends happen, we realized that now more than ever Elevate needs to double down now, we need to realize our mission of uniting the world's innovators to solve society's greatest challenges. And that's why we pivoted from a week-long tech festival as our primary engagement model to a year round organization, focused on a sustainable future on stakeholder capitalism and supporting social innovators across this country. So if Canada is going to lead the way in creating a more sustainable future, we all need to do our part. And so I'm going to quote Al Gore from the Elevate Mainstage when he said, I'm not here to talk to you, I'm here to recruit you, join us in uniting the world's innovators to solve society's greatest challenges

So in addition to announcing Elevate's new ambitious plan of the Elevate Social Innovation Exchange, also known as ElevateSIX. I'm also here to announce that Elevate has secured \$5 million in funding from the generous support of our government and founding partners to help us execute on this bold new future. So many of you must be wondering Razor, this sounds great. How can we help? How can we get involved? What's the plan? So there are three main pillars to our ElevateSIX strategy. First, we want to create a collaborative space for all of our partners and all of our communities to be able to gather in a COVID compliant space right here in the heart of Canada's financial district at King and Bay, we've seen so many important organizations from the shutting down of OneEleven to the exiting of Google sidewalk labs, leaving a hole in our ecosystem that we wanted to fill.

And so having physical space that manifests the vision of Elevate was critical to our strategy. Second, we're going to create the world's first digital media lab, exclusively focused on social innovators. We've all learned how important having world-class digital content is, but we've also had firsthand experience of understanding how difficult it is to create. And therefore it makes it inaccessible. We want to create a space where social innovators from community partners to our corporate innovators, to our government officials can create world-class digital content easily. And right here from home. Third, we were inspired by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation. They had created an SDG accelerator called goalkeepers. We wanted to take that global thinking and bring it right here from home because next generation of Canadians are building socially conscious businesses that not only do well, but do good. Imagine the next generation of Elon Musks that are powering the electric generation or the next generation of entrepreneurs building beyond meat who are bringing in the plant powered revolution.

We want to help and support those entrepreneurs of building globally relevant companies right here from Canada that we can export to the world. And of course, none of this would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of our hardworking team. None of this would have been possible without the generous support and passion of our board of directors. But most importantly, we wouldn't be able to do this without you, our Elevate community and partners that have been supporting us since the beginning. And I'm looking forward to welcoming you in joining us in building a better future for our community, our country, and our planet. Back to you, Lisa.

Lisa Zarzeczny - I remember when we were thinking back to this big idea, and we were thinking about a company that really embodied social impact and was using their business platform for social good. And we couldn't think of anyone doing it better than Salesforce. Salesforce sets the bar for stakeholder capitalism, taking care of their employees, their customers and communities while at the same time, running a massively successful business. Something that really resonated with me was when CEO, Mark Benioff learned that women were making 80 cents to the dollar than men made for equal work. He flipped the switch overnight and spent 10.3 million instituting equal pay. And as partners of Elevate, Salesforce has also stepped up in a really big way in the middle of a global pandemic. They doubled down. I'm proud to announce that

Salesforce is a founding partner of Elevate leading the charge at Salesforce Canada is Margaret Stuart. Margaret's had an incredible career. She's worked at companies like Blackberry and SAP, and is now the country manager at Salesforce, Canada. We're also pleased to introduce Margaret as the newest Elevate board member with co-chairs Chris and Helene Hadfield. Margaret, thank you so much for joining us today.

Margaret Stuart - Thank you, Lisa. I'm delighted to welcome everyone to Elevate. I'm Margaret Stuart, Country Manager for Salesforce, Canada. As the world's number one CRM platform, Salesforce brings companies and customers together in an age where customers expect seamless and personalized experiences from anywhere and at any time from our technology to our business model, to our philanthropy model. Innovation is at the heart of everything that we do at Salesforce. In fact, it's one of our four key values, trust, success, innovation and equality. We're in the midst of an unprecedented wave of disruption. And at Salesforce, we believe that innovation is the path forward.

Innovation is the path forward to a new normal one, where all stakeholders can participate and find their path to growth. For this reason, we're proud to be a founding partner of Elevate whose mission is to unite the world's innovators to solve society's greatest challenges. I strongly believe in the tech and innovation ecosystem in Canada. It's what sets us apart on the world Stage. Canada, it's never been more important to support and celebrate Elevate. Please join us.

Lisa Zarzeczny - Thanks Margaret. And thank you to the entire team at Salesforce. I look forward to working with all of you on this really important partnership. So I bet you guys are thinking right now that that was the announcement, but come on, you guys know us and you should know better. We're not stopping there and here to share the exciting news with you all. I'm pleased to welcome Elevate Co-Chair commander, Chris Hadfield.

Chris Hadfield - Thank you very much Lisa. I'm one of Elevates Co-Chairs, and I really want to take this moment to acknowledge the hard work that our board members have been putting in to make sure that Elevates mission and mandate are being fulfilled. Spaceflight was hard. It was years of work. And whenever I ran into an obstacle to seem insurmountable, I would always go back to my foundation to the fundamental mandate of what I was trying to accomplish. And it's really helped. I think through these complex times that Elevate is facing right now, number one, mandate, diversity gives us strength. The international space station is diverse just in its name. It is international, it's 15 countries and it's people from different cultures and religions and backgrounds and languages and beliefs, that diversity of thought, that diversity of perspective it's the only way the international space station could be as successful as the world-class laboratory.

The second mandate is to disrupt together. It's not a Tower of Babel on the space station. We have a clear understanding that we need to do things differently, but we need to take advantage of all of this diversity and work together. I could never have flown in space by myself. It took a tremendous amount of collective work of people working together in order to be able to do

something that was so disruptive and now to have opened the door to all the Canadians that will fly in space in the future. And the third part of our mandate, what we call, it's our time. I think, COVID has demonstrated just what an incredible place Canada is. We have disrupted our normal drastically. We have changed sort of who we are and we have done it because we've recognized that it's for the collective good. Canada has demonstrated leadership and dealing with this problem that really helped show that this is our time.

The world needs more Canada. And since the first festival back in 2017, the board has been working to make sure that that mandate is fulfilled and to be the guiding vision, to position Elevate, to be the world's fastest growing tech festival. Three years ago, we began with a focus to support Canadian tech and to support Canadian innovation. And the board has been working to support that drive to compete in the global market. And from that first festival, until now we've gained significant momentum towards our mission. Our mission, which has already been mentioned, but to unite the world's innovators, to be able to solve the world's greatest challenges. And we're facing perhaps the greatest challenge of our generation right now, the impact of the global pandemic, if anything, it has validated Elevate's role in bringing people's ideas together. We absolutely need that to solve this problem and all the ones that we're going to face in the future.

It's at moments like these that are our purposes and our values matter the most to the individuals and to the entire communities that we serve. And when we come out of this, this historic challenging moment, and we will, it seems endless right now, especially for the situation that a lot of people are in, but we will come out of this. And I'm confident that collectively we will be stronger because of the tech leaders who have stepped up, the people who have used their ingenuity and their collective ability to disrupt and change things during this crisis in order to help and better what's happening and in the future to provide a more sustainable situation, that will be good for us all. So thank you very much to the board members. Who've been doing the work, but I also want to thank our partners over the past few months, they've really demonstrated their leadership and they've doubled down on their commitment to Elevate, to support the Canadian tech and innovation community.

We're facing some really big challenges, but with our partners, our communities' resilience, and I'm really proud and inspired by the way that they've risen to the challenge. They've demonstrated flexibility and courage and trust and resilience. But with complex challenges comes opportunity and we have ambitious goals and Elevate, the launch of the Elevate Social Innovation Exchange. It's not only serving as the Canadian headquarters of the United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, but it's also a world class hub, a physical place, but also a virtual place, a place where entrepreneurs and ventures can seek to solve some of the world's greatest challenges, a place to build collective resilience and a place to advance our equity that we share together. So thank you very much to the partners and to Elevate board of directors. A great big thank you to our CEO and Co Founder, Razor Suleman, and his team.

And together, they are stewarding an organization that is moving forward, even through this time of complexity with excellent momentum. So thanks to everyone. Much has been accomplished, but when you really look at it, we've just taken one small step or two or three. I am so excited to be able to share a sneak peek of an upcoming launch. And astronauts love launches. A YouTube of a new series that I'm hosting and it's called Elevate Endeavor. I'm going to be talking to global icons in this limited series. Folks who are right at the very forefront of change. Our world right now is facing some problems that are affecting the planet itself and are definitely reshaping the lives of its citizens. It's never been more important to have challenging and complex conversations to investigate bold ideas and to inspire people, to make brave choices. 2020 especially has been one tough year. And this series is intended to give you the belief that we can do things collectively together to inspire you, to take action on some of the world's biggest issues at the personal level, and to find new and productive ways to disrupt the status quo together. So until launch, please take care of yourself, take care of your family. Look after your friends, be well. I'm very much looking forward to seeing you in September on YouTube at Elevate Endeavor. See you there.