

This Friday marks the 175th consecutive weekly “Free Raif Badawi” vigil in Sherbrooke, Quebec, where the imprisoned Saudi blogger’s family found asylum and have lived as permanent residents for the past three years. Badawi is still serving a seven-year prison sentence for “insulting Islam through electronic channels.” On April 26, to celebrate its 70th anniversary, the Montreal Press Club (MPC) presented its inaugural Freedom Award to Raif, movingly accepted in his absence by his son Douadi. Jordan Peterson (brilliantly) keynoted the event. Based on previous appearances elsewhere in Canada, we knew Peterson’s presence might provoke protests or disruptions. My committee had therefore taken extraordinary measures to vet individual ticket purchasers. The program ran smoothly — with one hitch: luckily without material consequence. But luck shouldn’t have been necessary. Our event was produced in partnership with Blue Metropolis, a prestigious, tax-funded annual Montreal writers’ festival (April 20-29 this year) boasting content from 19 countries in 15 languages. In November, when our MPC team met with Blue Met’s program team to pitch the collaboration, I was transparent about Peterson’s polarizing history, as it was clear our interlocutors weren’t familiar with Peterson’s name or reputation. I informed them of his trajectory to celebrity, as well as who dislikes him and why. They approved our partnership and a contract was signed (the terms of which we observed to the letter). English side of @Metropolisbleu and @MtlPressClub making their colours known. Montreal’s literary community deserves so much better. [pic.twitter.com/DXHjg7g5Z5](https://pic.twitter.com/DXHjg7g5Z5) — Sean Michaels (@stgramophone) March 20, 2018

The Blue Met programming team was not involved in the production of this event. It is a Montreal Press Club Event, honouring Saudi Arabian writer Raif Badawi, with his wife Ensaf Hadar accepting an award of his behalf. Blue Metropolis does not espouse Jordan Peterson’s views. — Blue Metropolis bleu (@Metropolisbleu) March 20, 2018

Blue Met launched its calendar of 200-plus programs on March 19. On March 20, 2018, Giller Prize winner Sean Michaels announced on Twitter, for all the world as though he were Blue Met’s official PR spokesperson rather than a private individual, that “Blue Metropolis does not espouse Jordan Peterson’s views,” and “was not involved in the production of this event.” As Blue Met did not rebut this on Twitter or elsewhere, it left the troubling inference to stand that Blue Met only associates its name with writers whose views they embrace, strongly suggesting that Blue Met is inherently politicized. Michaels clearly hoped to set a Twitter campaign in motion sufficient to threaten the event’s viability, but it didn’t take off (even hardline progressives probably didn’t like the optics of preventing universally admired Raif Badawi’s honour going forward). But he certainly put the wind up Blue Met, because — with no warning to us beforehand — on April 8, we received a demand via email to remove both the Blue Met name and logo from all our publicity. We were told Blue Met was “pleased” we were honouring Badawi, but that “we are now very concerned, as are many of our followers, that Jordan Peterson will draw the attention away from Badawi and towards himself.” In a subsequent email the same day we were warned “to be sure that Blue Met is not associated with the Peterson event” in any way. Our event was “disappeared” from Blue Met’s online calendar. On April 12, following a terse conversation between Blue Met’s Programming Director William St-Hillaire and MPC president Linda Renaud, in which Ms. St-Hillaire was reminded of our contractual rights, Blue Met reinstated our event in its online calendar, preceded by a statement on Twitter: “Blue Metropolis is not a co-producer of this event. Please note that the views expressed by the 262 authors taking part in the 2018 Blue Metropolis Festival are solely their own.”

Robert Fulford: Empathy, authenticity go a long way to explaining Jordan Peterson’s appeal  
After misconduct complaint, Jordan Peterson agrees to plan for clinical improvement  
Christie Blatchford: Jordan Peterson vs. the new freedom fighters at Queen’s University  
Far from clarifying the waters, this statement muddied them further. If Blue Met neither embraces nor condemns the views of any of the authors under its general umbrella, why was Jordan Peterson singled out for censure requiring action on Blue Met’s part? We were left to wonder if Blue Met had actually considered what its policy is regarding author views. It seemed clear to us that no consideration had been given either to policy or process in responding to Sean Michaels’ initial tweet. Blue Met’s instinct appears to have been to avoid controversy by appeasing Michaels and his near 12,000 Twitter followers, even though it meant exposing the MPC to disrepute, embarrassing Raif Badawi’s family, and quite possibly jeopardizing the event’s success. The MPC finds it unconscionable, not to mention deeply ironic, that professionals in a prestigious cultural organization honouring writing should defer to a single troublemaker motivated by extreme bias rather than do the requisite due diligence that would have put them in possession of what should be for their organization the single pertinent fact about Jordan Peterson: he is disliked by people holding far-left views, but his writings, podcasts, videos and public appearances always fall well within the boundaries of civil discourse. We asked Blue Met’s chairman, Cameron Charlebois, to issue a public apology to Dr.

Peterson for the gratuitous insult to his reputation caused by their statements and actions. Twelve days later, no response whatsoever. National Postkaybarb@gmail.com Twitter.com/BarbaraRKay