



**MAX GALA
PRESS KIT**



BACKGROUND

Muslim Awards for Excellence (MAX) is an initiative to recognize and honour the achievements and excellence of the Muslim community in Canada. This will culminate in the first annual MAX Gala, an awards ceremony taking place on March 24, 2016 at The Ritz-Carlton in Toronto.

The winners of six awards and six student scholarships will be announced at the Gala, following a robust public nomination and application process.

The objective of the MAX Awards is to recognize Muslims who have demonstrated significant achievement, leadership, and commitment to serving their community. The nominees are indicative of the diverse, thriving Canadian Muslim community that MAX is honouring; they consist of professionals and organizations spanning law, medicine, finance, non-profits, academia and the arts.

In a climate of negativity around Muslims, MAX is an initiative to recognize the broad contributions of Muslims to Canadian society.



FACT SHEET

WHAT: Inaugural MAX Gala and VIP reception

WHEN: Thursday March 24, 2016

- VIP Reception: 5.45PM
 - Open to sponsors, donors, dignitaries and elected officials
 - **Opportunity for media to photograph and interview VIPs**
- Gala: 6.45PM – 11PM
 - **Opportunity for media to do general coverage and interview award winners**

WHERE: The Ritz-Carlton Hotel – 181 Wellington St. W, Toronto, ON

- VIP Reception: Fourth floor
- Gala: Ballroom

MAX AWARD CATEGORIES:

- Platinum Award for Excellence (x3)
- Woman of the Year
- Entrepreneur of the Year
- Charity of the Year
- Friend of the Community
- Emerging Venture of the Year

MAX SCHOLARSHIP CATEGORIES:

- Walied and Deena Soliman High School All Star Scholarship (\$2,500 x2)
- Maimoona Wasi Ahmed Memorial University/College All Star Scholarship (\$2,500)
- Shamoon Ahsan University/College All Star Scholarship (\$2,500)
- Ike Ahmed University Entrance Scholarship (\$10,000)
- Mohammad Humayun Zafar Scholarship for Sciences and Engineering (\$10,000)

Award and scholarship applications: **389**

Attendees at the MAX Gala: **450**

Tickets: **Sold out**



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ZAIB SHAIKH

Film Commissioner & Director of Entertainment Industries, City of Toronto



Zaib Shaikh is known for his work on *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (2007), *Midnight's Children* (2012) and *Hello Faye* (2007). In 2014, he was named to the new post of Film Commissioner and Director of Entertainment Industries for the City of Toronto. It's a job whose previous focus was limited to film and television production, but has now been expanded to include the fields of music and multimedia, with part of the mandate being to solicit and generate interest in the Toronto scene around the world.

Mr. Shaikh possesses a Bachelor of Arts (B.A), Theatre, Acting and English for the University of Toronto and a Master of Fine Arts (MFA), Directing for the University of British Columbia.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

MOHAMED LACHEMI

Interim President and Vice-Chancellor, Ryerson University



Mohamed Lachemi is the interim president and vice chancellor of Ryerson University. Over the years he has led transformative change at Ryerson: as dean, associate dean, assistant chair, and founding graduate program director, he built up the university's reputation for discovery and real-world solutions, and for innovation in teaching. Under his leadership, many programs were created to help launch the new Faculty of Science. He instituted the Quality Assurance Office to ensure high standards; he created the Enrichment and Outreach Office to enhance the delivery of engineering and science outreach activities on campus and beyond; he founded the Research and Innovation Office to develop and deliver scholarly, research and creative (SRC) activities;

and he played a key role in establishing the Centre for Urban Energy.

A leader in the field of civil engineering, Dr. Lachemi sees the impact of high standards. He is well known for his pioneering work and significant research contributions toward reducing global environmental impacts of the construction industry through the development of high-performance materials and innovative technologies. His achievements include an international project that led to the construction of the world's first reactive powder concrete structure. His research agenda has been strongly supported by funding agencies and industrial partners. He has spoken at conferences and workshops around the world. He was named Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Construction; and in 2011, he was inducted as a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Engineering, one of the highest academic honours for Canadian engineers.



MAX FOUNDER

AAZAR ZAFAR



Aazar Zafar is a CA (Chartered Accountant) and CFA Charter Holder. He obtained his Bachelor's and Master's from the University of Waterloo, regarded as the number one Accounting School in Canada.

Mr. Zafar worked at PwC for several years where he earned his CA designation. He worked in the areas of Mergers & Acquisitions, Valuations, Audit and Corporate Tax. Subsequently, Aazar has worked for a decade in the Private Equity/Infrastructure area at 3 Pension Plans in Canada – OMERS, AIMCo, and presently is at OPSEU Pension Trust in downtown

Toronto. Mr. Zafar also separately runs his own ethical investment club which has been in operation since 2002.

Aazar supports various community initiatives. He co-founded I-Slam.ca in 2002 to create an Ontario-wide and united Basketball tournament for Muslims, featuring over 30 teams at the first tournament at Crescent School. After passing on the torch to great individuals, I-Slam today runs both a full-fledged basketball league as well as a superb ball hockey league. Over half of the basketball league participants are members of other faiths, which is a great testament to its success. Later in the decade, he founded CEA (Crescent Entrepreneurial Association) to encourage Muslim youth to become entrepreneurs, and CEA ran an annual business case competition. Aazar has also been involved in co-founding a couple of other initiatives to encourage participation by Muslims in professional gatherings, Canadian politics, and Canadian society at large to further build bridges and become an integral part of this great country, Canada. Most recently, in 2015, Aazar co-founded MAX (Muslim Awards of Excellence) to celebrate and motivate high levels of excellence by Canadian Muslims in various professions and fields across Canadian society and globally.



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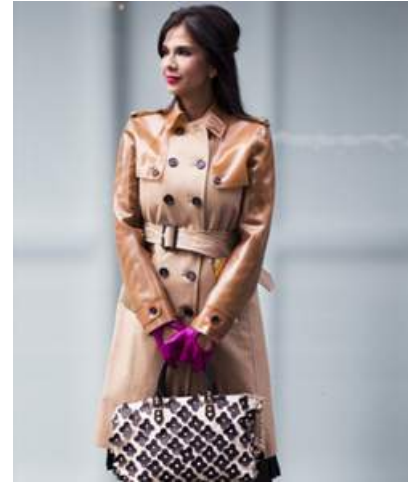
ADVISORY BOARD



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PRESS RELEASE

National Awards Gala to Recognize Contributions of Canadian Muslims

TORONTO, Dec. 18, 2015 – An initiative to recognize Muslims’ positive contributions to Canadian society will culminate with the inaugural Muslim Awards for Excellence (MAX) Gala on March 24, 2016 at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Toronto, Ontario.

A nation-wide nomination process is currently underway to recognize Muslims from all professional spheres who have demonstrated significant achievement, leadership, and commitment to serving their community in Canada. Nominees are in contention for three MAX Platinum Awards for Excellence, as well as MAX Woman of the Year, Entrepreneur of the Year, Charity of the Year, and Friend of the Year. Scholarships for six outstanding Muslim high school and university students are also up for grabs. Winners will be announced at the first annual MAX Gala in March, with keynote speeches by prominent Muslim Canadians including Toronto Film Commissioner and *Little Mosque on the Prairie* star Zaib Shaikh, and Ryerson University President Mohamed Lachemi.

A rising wave of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric drove MAX founder Aazar Zafar’s desire to highlight bright Muslim minds in Canada and their incredible achievements and contributions. “This narrative of violence and terrorism is not the Islam the vast majority of Muslims have grown up with,” said Zafar. “Education and service are tenets of Islam, and are also central Canadian values. MAX honours that, and as proud Canadians, we aim to recognize and motivate high achievement in the country.”

Nominations for MAX awards and scholarships are open to the general public and can be submitted online at <http://www.maxgala.com/nominate-a-max/>. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2016.

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PRESS RELEASE

Toronto Film Commissioner Zaib Shaikh, Ryerson University Interim President Mohammed Lachemi Announced as Keynote Speakers at Inaugural Canadian Muslim Awards Gala

TORONTO, Feb. 23, 2016 – Film Commissioner and Director of Entertainment Industries for the City of Toronto, Zaib Shaikh, and interim President and Vice-Chancellor of Ryerson University, Mohamed Lachemi, will be the keynote speakers at the inaugural Muslim Awards for Excellence (MAX) Gala. The Gala will take place on March 24, 2016 at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Toronto.

The MAX Gala is an initiative to recognize Muslims from various professional spheres who have demonstrated significant achievement, leadership, and commitment to serving their community in Canada. The winners of six awards and six student scholarships will be announced at the Gala after a robust public nomination and application process.

“Canadian Muslims from all origins are thriving and succeeding in all sorts of career paths and fields,” says Shaikh. “Diversity is key to progress, and this is a great opportunity to celebrate that, and move beyond stereotypes.”

The MAX award nominees are professionals and organizations spanning law, medicine, finance, non-profits, academia and the arts. The pool is indicative of the broad contributions of Muslims to Canadian society.

Scholarships totaling \$30,000 will be granted to six outstanding high school and university students. “I am pleased to be part of recognizing excellence by members of the Canadian Muslim community,” says Lachemi. “As accomplished individuals who also give back, the award and scholarship nominees demonstrate that they are excellent citizens as well as top achievers.”

Aazar Zafar, founder of MAX, says, “Zaib Shaikh and Mohamed Lachemi are shining examples of the Canadian Muslim community. Their achievements and contributions to their respective fields and to society at large align perfectly with the MAX vision. We are honoured to feature Zaib and Mohamed as keynote speakers at our first annual MAX Gala.”

WHAT: Muslim Awards for Excellence (MAX) Gala

WHEN: March 24, 2016, 5:45PM - 11PM

WHERE: The Ritz-Carlton Hotel – 181 Wellington St. W, Toronto, ON

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