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October 26, 2018

Hamilton Future Fund Board of Governors c/o Alicia Davenport, Legislative Coordinator Office of the City Clerk, City Manager's Office 1st Floor, 71 Main Street West Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Hamilton Future Fund Board of Governors,

On behalf of Theatre Aquarius, I am writing to report on the successful completion of the Audience Accessibility Project, which is a vital project we undertook to ensure that our theatre centre meets the accessibility requirements outlined in the Ontario Building Code. Through the completion of this project, we have removed barriers that prevented the full use of our facility, and have created a space that is accessible to all in our shared community.

Last year, when we submitted our application to the Hamilton Future Fund requesting support that would enable us to complete the project, we had already made significant changes to our facility to improve accessibility. Phase 1 had included the development of a new canopy and marquee to allow patrons with mobility issues to enter the facility protected from the elements and safe from weather-related barriers. It had also included the elimination of exterior building elements that obstructed the barrier-free path of travel; the revision and expansion of exterior curb ramps to comply with current safety and accessibility standards; and the implementation of a new assisted listening system complete with infrared headsets and personal induction loop devices.

Thanks to the support of the Hamilton Future Fund, we were able to complete the project this past spring/summer (May to September, 2018). Phase 2 involved the renovation (i.e. widening) of key access routes throughout the interior of the facility, such as the doors and doorways between the main lobby and the sound and light-locked areas, the doors and doorways between the sound and light-locked areas and the auditorium, and so on. As a result, patrons who make use of accessibility aids, such as wheelchairs, ECVs, etc. are now able to enter, exit, and move within the theatre in comfort, dignity, and safety.

Phase 2 also involved the creation of an Accessible Seating Platform within the auditorium, which provides significantly more wheelchair-accessible and companion seating options than were previously available. In keeping with the Ontario Building Code, the seating offered in this area is designated to cater to those requiring accessible facilities, and represents 3.1% of the theatre's total seating capacity. This was a major renovation project in itself that involved the removal of two full rows of orchestra-level seating, and, therefore, would not have been possible without the support of the Hamilton Future Fund.

Finally, Phase 2 also involved the provision of other barrier-free amenities, such as a lower Box Office counter, a lower Coat Check counter, and updates to the barrier-free washroom. When taken together, these lasting improvements to our facility have created a cultural hub in Hamilton

that is comfortable, dignified, and safe for those requiring accessible facilities. In essence, through the completion of the Audience Accessibility Project, we have made Theatre Aquarius welcoming to all in our shared community.

I would therefore like to express my heartfelt thanks for your support of the project and your commitment to the creation of inclusive spaces.

For your review, I have enclosed an audited Schedule of Revenues and Expenditures for the project, as well as a copy of the project summary that was displayed in our lobby for the Opening of our 46th season and the run of *Spider's Web*. We have added a fourth page to this project summary to include some "after" photos, so that we may show you, quite literally, the significant changes your investment has made.

Thank you, and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lorna Zaremba Executive Director 905.522.7815 x223 Izaremba@theatreaquarius.org

Encl. Audited Schedule of Revenues and Expenditures for the Theatre Aquarius Audience Accessibility Project

Theatre Aquarius Audience Accessibility Project summary displayed in Ron and Donna Patterson Lobby (September to October, 2018), with additional "after" photos

Theatre Aquarius Audience Accessibility Project:

A SEASON OF CHANGE



If you are a regular theatre-goer, you will know that the transformation that you see today has been a work in progress for some time. Patrons who joined us for the "Comedy of Errors" or "Mamma Mia" may remember our lobby as a construction zone. We hope that you will agree that the results have been worth the wait.

For the second year in a row, Theatre Aquarius audiences are returning to find that a transformation has taken place within our



theatre centre.

In 2018, after many years of planning, fundraising and execution, we have brought our Audience Accessibility Project to a successful conclusion. The goal of this project is to ensure barrier-free access



and full participation to all members of the community, regardless of physical ability. As our population ages, there is no doubt that standards for accessibility will continue to evolve, and that the demand for fully accessible facilities will only increase. While we embrace this challenge, it was clear that changing standards in the years since our facility opened had left us with a long way to go to provide the kind of fully accessible service that our patrons deserve. Thanks to the hard work and generosity of many in our community, we have been able to fully realize that vision.

THEATRE AQUARIUS RON ULRICH Artistic Director

Theatre Aquarius Audience Accessibility Project:

OUR PARTNERS

Last year, with the generous support of **The Canada Cultural Spaces Fund** (CCSF), the **Patrick J. McNally Charitable Foundation** and the **City of Hamilton**, and the hard work of **DPAI Architects** and **Historia Building Restoration**, Theatre Aquarius was able to fundamentally reinvent the entrances to our theatre centre to facilitate barrier-free access into our lobby area and dramatically improve our hearing assisted devices. While this enormous project was a tremendous success, it still only answered a part of our desire to better serve our public. The full realization of our vision still seemed like a distant goal.



Thankfully the **Hamilton Future Fund** agreed with Theatre Aquarius that ensuring that our landmark theatre centre became truly accessible to all, regardless of physical ability represented a legacy for the community, based on inclusion, fairness and access for all. It is their commitment to create such legacies for the citizens of Hamilton, present and future, that made this moment possible. Together with the corporate support of **Great-West Life Assurance Company**, Theatre Aquarius was ready to take the bold steps you can see today.

> This project has been made possible in part by the Government of Canada. Ce projet a été rendu possible en partie grâce au gouvernement du Canada









STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER™





Patrick J. McNally Charitable Foundation

THEATRE AQUARIUS RONULRICH Artistic Director

Theatre Aquarius Audience Accessibility Project: CELEBRATING THEATRE TOGETHER



Our Box Office and Coat Check counters will now be fully accessible to patrons using wheelchairs and other assistive devices. Barrier-free access has improved in our accessible washroom, and a number of automated doors have been added to the space.

The most significant changes become evident as you move into the space. The three main doors into the auditorium on each side have been replaced with two much larger doors, creating access which can accommodate the width and turning radius of modern assistive devices. Likewise, the first door in the light-locks has also been torn out and widened significantly. Two rows of seating have been removed entirely, creating a unique seating area where up to 10 patrons in wheelchairs can be accommodated, together with 12 companion seats, staggered to allow all of our patrons to enjoy excellent views in comfort, and share in the community of theatre lovers with dignity.

While this concludes major construction for this project, the goal of complete equality and inclusiveness is one that we continue to strive for. Theatre Aquarius is committed to the goals of the Ontarians With Disabilities Act, and to ensuring a welcoming environment for all members of our community, regardless of physical disability. To learn more about this commitment or to communicate with staff regarding any existing issues, please visit www.theatreaquarius.org/box-office/accessibility/

Light-lock doorways were widened to accomidate modern assistive devices. Two rows of seats were removed and a new pad was created to serve patrons in need of accessible seating and their companions.



THEATRE AQUARIUS RON ULRICH Artistic Director

Theatre Aquarius Audience Accessibility Project:

EFFECTIVE CHANGE

Theatre Aquarius is proud of the enhancements that have been





NEW COUNTERS: The coat check and box office have been renovated to include new, lower counters that are accessible for all theatre patrons.



NEW DOORS: We have widened the doors and doorways in the lobby, sound and light-locked areas, auditorium and accessible washroom to accomodate larger wheelchairs and ECV's, as well as added a push-button automatic door operator to our accessible washroom.



NEW SEATING: Our new seating platform makes the theatre more accessible than ever. With more space to manuever and more capacity we have significantly increased the number of barrier-free seats available to patrons.

