

October 26, 2023 – For Immediate Release

## **Toronto Fringe Utilizes Community Services Recovery Fund to Expand Accessibility and Community Care**

With the generous support of the Government of Canada's **Community Services Recovery Fund**, administered by the Canadian Red Cross, the **Toronto Fringe** has been able to expand accessibility and community care to artists, volunteers, patrons and staff through active listening and peer support throughout their 2023 activities. Due to this generous fund, the **Toronto Fringe** was able to utilize mental health resources during **Toronto Fringe Festival** in July 2023, and is proud to do the same for the upcoming **Next Stage Theatre Festival**.

The 16<sup>th</sup> **Next Stage Theatre Festival**, October 18-29 at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, will have active listeners available before, after and during performances each day, as well as auxiliary events, that are available to everyone. On Saturday October 21, in collaboration with TAPA's Indie caucus, **Toronto Fringe** hosted a public gathering of indie artists to have discussions about supporting the mental wellbeing of artists. The event asked some of the following questions: *What does it look like to build mental health accessibility into your budgets and project plans? How do producers, directors, production teams find support for themselves as well as the artists they work with? What resources can be shared amongst a team?*

During the summertime **Toronto Fringe Festival**, active listeners were available at the POSTSCRIPT Patio, online, and at multiple venues across the city. The service was used by staff, volunteers, artists and patrons. Over 175 hours of active listening were provided with the service being used twice a day on average across the entire festival.

Active Listening & Peer Support are supportive, compassionate and empathetic relationships between two people who have lived experience in common. Those experiences can be that of one's own mental illness, addiction, or that of loved one(s). The empowerment, hope and resources that come from a person who has been in their shoes can help navigate complicated and confusing feelings. Connecting with another person who has had similar lived experiences can be a vital link for someone struggling with their own situation.

Access to mental health care and treatment is not always accessible, especially to artists who have experienced an increase in job precarity due to COVID-19. Offering active listening and peer support to artists working in festivals can support their mental health and wellbeing in what can be a stressful and challenging time. Sometimes, the content of a show itself can stir up feelings that are upsetting. Having a

person with a shared identity or experience can support their artistic practice and create a safer rehearsal and performance space for all artists.

**The Community Services Recovery Fund** is a one-time \$400 million investment from the Government of Canada to support community service organizations, including charities, non-profits and Indigenous governing bodies, as they adapt and modernize their organizations. The Government of Canada delivered the Community Services Recovery Fund through three National Funders – Canadian Red Cross, Community Foundations of Canada, and United Way Centraide Canada.

*“I am continually impressed by the passion, dedication, and creativity of community service organizations, like Toronto Fringe. I am equally proud the Government of Canada has supported their important work through the Community Services Recovery Fund. By investing in these organizations and their projects we can help to create a more just and equitable society, where everyone has opportunities to succeed. I look forward to seeing the positive impact of this investment in Toronto over the years to come.”*

– **Jenna Sudds, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development**

**Toronto Fringe** is a grassroots, charitable organization that runs the Toronto Fringe Festival each July and the annual Next Stage Theatre Festival each October. Toronto Fringe offers various year-round programs that benefit youth, emerging artists, BIPOC artists, artists with disabilities, and the performing arts community at large. Embedded in Fringe’s operations are the values of Access, Accountability, Creativity, Exploration, and Support.

**Next Stage Theatre Festival**

October 18-29, 2023

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

12 Alexander Street

Tickets and Passes On Sale Now at  
<https://fringetoronto.com/next-stage/>

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**Canada** 