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**Media Release October 18th 2024**

**$100,000 Ontario Government Grant**

**Supports Accessibility Renovations at Schoolhouse Theatre**

**Kitchener, ON** – In September 2023, Drayton Entertainment was awarded a $100,000 Capital grant from the provincial government’s Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to improve accessibility for theatregoers and community members at the Hildebrand Schoolhouse Theatre, St. Jacobs.

“I am thankful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for making local culture and arts operators and venues a priority here in Waterloo Region,” said **Mike Harris**, MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga. “Drayton Entertainment has been an advocate for inclusive and accessible community spaces, and I’m extremely pleased they will be putting the funds to great use locally at the Schoolhouse Theatre.”

The grant supports the expansion and redesign of the theatre’s washroom facilities to better serve seniors, people with disabilities, families with young children, and non-binary gender identifying individuals. The new washrooms are an integral component of a larger $1 million renovation primarily focused on front-of-house amenities and backstage functionality to better support the scale and scope of Drayton Entertainment’s live theatre programming, and improve overall accessibility. Construction began in January 2024 and was completed prior to the theatre’s 2024 Season, which includes *The Marvelous Wonderettes*, *Dear Jack Dear Louise*, and *Merry & Bright*. The renovation supports the expansion of theatre programming and community events year-round, with attendance expected to grow to over 20,000 annually.

“Thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Drayton Entertainment will meet the needs of audiences, today and in the future, at a time when having access to the arts is more important than ever,” said **Willy Heffner**, Chair of the volunteer Board of Directors for Drayton Entertainment.

Over the past several years, Drayton Entertainment has reconfigured front-of-house amenities at its theatres in Cambridge, St. Jacobs and Grand Bend, so that all venues are equipped with universal and accessible washrooms – an integral part of the award-winning, not-for-profit charitable organization’s ongoing commitment to affordability, accessibility, and social inclusion.

“Whether it’s helping people learn new things, connect with their community, or simply have fun, organizations like Drayton Entertainment deliver experiences that make a difference,” said **Stan Cho**, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. “That’s why grant support through the Ontario Trillium Foundation is so important. This funding will help ensure they remain at the heart of the community for decades to come."

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Ontario government with a mission to build healthy and vibrant communities across the province. Last year, OTF invested more than $110M into 1,044 community projects and multi-sector partnerships. Projects aim to enhance economic well-being, foster more active lifestyles, support child and youth development, provide spaces for people to come together and connect, and create a more sustainable environment. Visit otf.ca to learn more.

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