

Cultural Centre celebrates grants of \$320,000 to restore Brevik Hall, get back on their feet



The historic doors of 22 Church Street, the long-time home of the Aurora Cultural Centre, swung open to welcome guests to a special event for the first time since 2019 – this time to celebrate grant funding from the Government of Ontario.

The landmark, well-known as the Church Street School, was a fitting place for the announcement as a large portion of the \$320,800-worth of grants were earmarked to restore heritage spaces within the building, specifically the Brevik Hall performance area.

Of the total grant funding, \$195,800 was awarded to the Centre through Ontario's Resilient Communities Fund, which was designed to help non-profits get back on their feet following the global pandemic, with the balance set for significant improvements to the Hall.

“People in Aurora have a much longer history with this facility than I have and that's what we want to preserve,” said Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa of the building that first opened its doors as a school in the 1880s, and has served the community in various capacities ever since.

Brevik Hall was, he noted, the setting for one of the very first events he hosted as an MPP following his first election in 2018.

“We want to make sure [we preserve] that history and in order to do that, we have to make sure that's backstopped and supported through investments as well. That's where I want to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ontario Government, that always does great work.”

Each year, volunteers with the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) sift through more than 1,000 grant applications intended to support non-profits.

Local OTF volunteer Shelley Wister Smith, said the Centre provided “two strong grants” to the reviewers to help the Centre with staffing costs, workshops for staff, and the \$125,000 capital grant for Brevik Hall.

“Brevik Hall has been a central part of our communities since the late 1800s,” said Wister Smith. “With these grants and all the other work happening on site, it should continue to do so for many years to come. Congratulations on what you have achieved so far and we're all looking forward to seeing the work when it's completed.”

Welcoming guests to the space, which has been temporarily shuttered due to the significant addition being added on to the school as

part of the Aurora Town Square redevelopment, Aurora Cultural Centre Executive Director Suzanne Haines said the new funding will help make the Hall an integral part of the Square experience.

?The Ontario Trillium Foundation has a very special place at the Aurora Cultural Centre and support for the social sector across Ontario,? said Haines. ?The Aurora Cultural Centre has had many strong and meaningful partnerships with OTF through the years and the Ontario Trillium Foundation has continued to be a valued partner to support us in delivering programs in the artistic and cultural needs of our community.

?All not for profit organizations, especially in the arts, are emerging from COVID still and programs have had to change and grow differently. Having the Resilience Grant that recognizes the need for us to rebuild our structure and deliver programs makes us a far stronger organization and the Capital Grant will renew and upgrade Brevik Hall to a fully functional artistic gathering space, allowing this performance room to be used for a wider variety of activity within Aurora Town Square as a much more effective companion to the new performance hall being built beside us.?

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