

Ford government cutting \$15 million from grants to Trillium Foundation

Written By **MIKE BAKER**

The Ontario government has withdrawn a promised \$15 million to Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF); money the foundation would have granted out to community projects this winter. Funding that would have strengthened communities now won't be distributed ? such as funding to fix the ice rink roof, support a local festival, buy community play equipment, provide meals to vulnerable people, and create jobs.

OTF grants are given to nonprofits, First Nations, and small municipalities to implement important community projects and initiatives. The Ontario Nonprofit Network is concerned this large cut will cancel and delay important planned projects and is asking the government to reverse its decision:

?OTF grants help us all be open to the business of strengthening the people and communities of Ontario. This funding cut puts communities at risk. The government should keep its promise and restore funding,? says Cathy Taylor, executive director at the Ontario Nonprofit Network.

Concerns regarding the funding cut are shared by many, including the Rural Ontario Institute:

?One of the realities nonprofit organizations serving small rural communities face is that there are relatively few other funding organizations to turn to when it comes to pooling resources for projects. OTF is very important for rural municipalities and nonprofits alike. Fewer resources for the OTF will likely be felt by these stakeholders,? says Norman Ragetlie, executive director of the Rural Ontario Institute.

Locally, Theatre Orangeville is one of many non-profit organizations which have regularly received OTF grants.

The OTF provides critical investments in community services and facilities across this province ? to organizations such as food banks, sports facilities, arts organizations and social service providers.

As noted in its annual report, not counting programs it administers for other ministries, OTF invested \$100 million directly in the community economy in 2016-2017. Through its Seed, Grow, and Collective Impact streams, OTF funded 469 projects in 2016-2017 that will impact over 750,000 Ontarians over three years. OTF's 203 capital grants in 2016-2017 invested \$22.4 million into nonprofits, First Nations, and small municipalities.

According to figures provided in its 2016-2017 annual report, 87% of OTF funding goes to job creation in local communities, hiring people to improve community health and well-being. These are meaningful jobs for both the employees and program participants.

OTF's grants also support the purchasing of goods from local suppliers and the hiring of local contractors. These are spin-off benefits for the local economy that will be reduced with OTF's funding cut.

Because granting decisions are made by regional volunteer committees, grants are highly responsive to what communities need.