

An Appeal to the members and supporters of Community Theatre

Hello,

We are writing to you today to ask for your support in a very serious matter. A few years ago, one of our volunteers was injured when helping out with one of our shows. Subsequently a WCB claim was filed and paid out to this individual, without going through our insurance provider and despite the fact that we do not have a WCB account nor are required to have one. The consequence of this is that the Workers Compensation Board of Alberta is demanding that we now open a WCB account and pay several thousand dollars a year to them in order to cover all of our volunteers.

There are no volunteer run, non-profit charitable community based theatre groups that possess a WCB account, without voluntarily signing up for one in the province of Alberta. The impact of this is that it will set a precedent and jeopardize the operation of similarly run organizations in our province who might not be able to afford those fees.

We have attempted to appeal the decision, and have been denied on all fronts. We have one final appeal left that we must submit before the end of 2012. We are asking you, as a supporter of Front Row Centre and of community based arts programs, to lend your voice in outrage of this injustice. Your local theatre groups are at risk and may be forced to shut down if our appeal becomes denied for a final time.

Included with this email is a letter. Please forward this letter on to the people and agencies listed below, or sign it and mail it in to them and to your MLA expressing your opinion on the matter.

Guy Kerr, President and CEO of WCB Alberta
Office of Associate Minister Frank Oberle, MLA in charge of WCB
Office of Heather Klimchuk, Minister of Culture
Rick Bell, columnist at the Calgary Sun
Linda Motley, editor in chief of Calgary Herald
QR77 news
CTV News
CBC News
Global News
Mayor Nenshi's Office

guy.kerr@wcb.ab.ca
Mike.Simpson@gov.ab.ca
jeremy.block@gov.ab.ca
rick.bell@sunmedia.ca
lmotley@calgaryherald.com
<http://www.qr77.com/LauraKnopContact.aspx>
news@ctv.ca
calgarynewstips@cbc.ca
Calgary@globalnews.ca
themayor@calgary.ca

Go on to Alberta's government contact site: <http://alberta.ca/contact.cfm>

Post on Premier Redford's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/PremierRedford>

Janos Zeller, Vice President
Front Row Centre Players Society
Calgary's Premier Community Musical Theatre Company
<http://www.frontrowcentre.ca>
(403) 246-8505

To Whom It May Concern,

This is an open letter to bring a serious matter to your attention. A situation has arisen which will threaten the continuation of arts and culture programs here in the province of Alberta. Front Row Centre Players Society, a community based, non-for-profit, 100% volunteer run and operated charitable institution, is being forced to pay WCB coverage, despite the organization having no employees or paid personnel.

The Workers Compensation Board of Alberta is demanding that the estimated tens of thousands of volunteer hours that go into the service of our arts and culture mandate are to be covered by WCB. This amounts to **thousands of dollars to be paid** to the WCB of Alberta every year, for coverage of a “hobby activity”, despite the WCB stating in its documentation that “if you are a non-profit employer who engages volunteers... you **may** apply to have them covered” (http://www.wcb.ab.ca/pdfs/employers/EFS_Who_do_i_have_to_cover.pdf) AND *Safe Stages*, a joint publication of Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry and Theatre Alberta (http://www.theatrealberta.com/documents/SafeStages_Web.pdf).

There are currently more than 75 organizations listed on Theatre Alberta’s website, www.theatrealberta.com, operating as community theatres in Alberta, and of those, less than five are currently paying WCB, and none of them on their volunteers. If Front Row Centre accepts the ruling of the WCB, a precedent will be set: **every volunteer run performing arts organization in Alberta could be subjected to hefty fees**, several of whom might not be able to afford them, and subsequently will have to discontinue operations. This could also threaten many additional theatre organizations that aren’t currently members of Theatre Alberta, not to mention other volunteer performing arts organizations, such as dance troupes, music performance societies, or choral groups that exist in our province.

Community based, volunteer run organizations that are hobbyist societies should not be forced to pay the fees levied by the Workers Compensation Board of Alberta. They should be treated just the same as Amateur Sports organizations and other hobby groups and given the option to apply for WCB coverage. Charitable Institutions, Clubs, Artists and Entertainers, are all listed as being exempt from WCB coverage (<https://my.wcb.ab.ca/rm/WCB.RateManual.WebServer/ExemptIndustries.aspx>). We fall under all of those categories and yet are being denied the option to be covered solely by our insurance, and now must double pay. This is neither fair nor right.

Our last chance to appeal this decision is before January 2013, and we have run out of time. Please do whatever you can to make sure that our performing arts organizations here in Alberta are protected from this injustice.

(print name)

(sign name)

By signing this letter, I state my agreement with the aforementioned.