

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RBC FOUNDATION COMMUNITY SPACES GRANT HELPS BUILD NORTH AMERICA'S FIRST ZERO CARBON BUILDING DESIGN THEATRE

- RBC Foundation has committed a \$750,000 Community Spaces Grant to the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario – one of 41 Canadian communities supported by the 2026 RBC Foundation Community Spaces Grant
- The grant will fund a geothermal well system for the new Royal George Theatre, which is being rebuilt as North America's first zero carbon building design performing arts venue, with an expected opening of fall 2028
- The theatre will be the first performing arts centre in North America to achieve both Zero Carbon Building Design certification and Rick Hansen Foundation Gold certification for accessibility

Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON (July 23, 2026) – The Shaw Festival recently announced a \$750,000 donation from the RBC Foundation Community Spaces Grant over three years to support the rebuilding of the Royal George Theatre, designed to become North America's first theatre to achieve Zero Carbon Building Design certification. The donation marks the first major corporate gift to rebuild the Royal George, as part of the Shaw Festival's transformative All.Together.Now. Campaign for real human connection.

Niagara-on-the Lake is one of 41 communities across Canada receiving support through the 2026 RBC Foundation Community Spaces Grant, designed to fund retrofits, repairs or upgrades to existing public community buildings, as well as the construction of new public spaces that help improve accessibility and environmental sustainability.

The Shaw Festival is currently rebuilding its iconic Royal George Theatre as one of North America's most environmentally advanced and accessible performing arts venues. This grant will go toward its Zero Carbon Building Design certification through the installation of the theatre's geothermal well system as the cornerstone of the building's innovative heating and cooling infrastructure. Zero Carbon Building Design certification recognizes buildings that are designed to achieve net-zero operational carbon under the Canada Green Building Council standard. This will eliminate on-site fossil fuel use while dramatically reducing the building's long-term environmental footprint.

“The Shaw Festival has been a cultural cornerstone of the Niagara region for generations – a gathering place where shared experiences bring people together and strengthen our communities,” said Andrea Barrack, Senior Vice President, Sustainability

& Impact, RBC. "Through the RBC Foundation Community Spaces Grant, we are proud to help write its next chapter by funding the first zero carbon building design theatre in North America."

The geothermal system will harness the stable temperature below the earth's surface to provide efficient year-round heating and cooling, creating a resilient, all-electric building. Energy modelling shows the new theatre will operate at approximately 19 per cent of the original building's energy intensity, and 36 per cent of the national average for comparable performing arts facilities, while geothermal heating and cooling will significantly reduce emissions and long-term operating costs.

"The Shaw Festival is deeply grateful to RBC Foundation for this landmark gift and its leadership in creating a more sustainable future," said Tim Jennings, Executive Director/CEO of the Shaw Festival. "The plans for our new Royal George Theatre honour its remarkable history while building for the future. Achieving North America's first Zero Carbon Building Design certification for a theatre reflects our commitment to protecting the environment and ensuring this beloved cultural institution continues to inspire and connect audiences for generations. We are honoured to have RBC Foundation's support to bring these plans to life."

The New Royal George Theatre

The Royal George Theatre is one of Canada's most significant cultural institutions, welcoming more than 100,000 people annually and serving as an economic and social anchor for Niagara-on-the-Lake and the surrounding region, generating \$70M of economic impact annually.

Scheduled to open in fall 2028, the new Royal George Theatre will be the first performing arts centre in North America to achieve both Zero Carbon Building Design certification and Rick Hansen Foundation Gold certification, ensuring environmental sustainability and accessibility are embedded throughout the building.

The Royal George Theatre is being rebuilt following the closing of the original 110-year-old building whose aging infrastructure had reached the end of its functional life. The new theatre will preserve the beloved character of the original building, while expanding spaces and opportunities for community engagement, education and creativity for people of all ages.

For more information about the Royal George Theatre, visit shawfest.com/royalgeorge.

All.Together.Now.Campaign

Launched in 2025, the All.Together.Now. Campaign is the most transformative fundraising campaign in the Shaw Festival's history. One of North America's largest charitable theatre companies, The Shaw is raising \$150 million to advance its vision of creating deeper human connection through theatre.

The Campaign is focused on creating new spaces at its Niagara-on-the-Lake campus – including the new Royal George Theatre, the Shaw Artists' Village and the Burton Centre for Lifelong Creativity - while expanding its innovative programming focused on engaging experiences, training, artists and community outreach. Inspired by the belief that theatre is a powerful force for human connection, the Campaign is helping people of all ages connect, create and discover their inner artist.

For more information about Shaw's All.Together.Now. campaign for real human connection, visit shawfest.com/alltogethernow.

Quick Facts:

- **Grant amount and purpose:** \$750,000 over 3-years from the RBC Foundation Community Spaces Grant will fund the geothermal well system for the new Royal George Theatre's heating and cooling infrastructure
- **Why it matters:** This will eliminate on-site fossil fuel use and position the Royal George as North America's first Zero Carbon Building Design theatre
- **Energy impact:** The new theatre will operate at approximately 19 per cent of the original building's energy intensity, and 36 per cent of the national average for comparable performing arts facilities
- **Opening date:** Fall 2028
- **Annual visitors and economic impact:** The Royal George Theatre welcomes more than 100,000 people per year and generates \$70 million in annual economic impact for the Niagara-on-the-Lake region
- **Certifications:** First performing arts centre in North America to pursue both Zero Carbon Building Design certification and Rick Hansen Foundation Gold certification
- **Original building:** The 110-year-old Royal George Theatre was closed when its aging infrastructure reached the end of its functional life

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The Shaw Festival wishes to acknowledge and honour the land upon which its patrons and company members gather as the historic and traditional territory of First Nations peoples. Recognition and thanks are extended to the Neutral Nation, the Mississauga and the Haudenosaunee for their stewardship of these lands over millennia.

About the Shaw Festival

One of the largest charitable theatre companies in North America, the Shaw Festival's mission is to enrich and connect people's lives through theatre. Based in beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake, The Shaw's 2026 productions include [*Funny Girl*](#), [*One for the Pot*](#), [*Amadeus*](#), [*Sleuth*](#), [*Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense*](#), [*A New Work in Progress*](#), [*The Wind in the Willows*](#), [*Heartbreak House*](#) and [*Ohio State Murders*](#). The Shaw Festival's Holiday Season includes [*A Year with Frog and Toad*](#) and [*Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*](#).

Through its [All.Together.Now.](#) campaign, The Shaw is creating new spaces and programs where people can build real human connections and rediscover their creativity. For more information, visit shawfest.com.

We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing. ~ George Bernard Shaw

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