

2012 JUN -4 A 8:04

canadianstage

Friday, June 1, 2012

Dear Toronto City Councillors,

My name is Erin Schachter and I am currently the Education & Enrichment Manager at Canadian Stage. I am writing today in response to the news that 60% of our city's youth workers are at risk of losing their positions, including all of the youth workers whom I currently work with. I would like to recommend that a portion of the city's surplus be utilized to save these youth workers.

At Canadian Stage we are committed to the belief that theatre is a tool for understanding, educating and enriching lives. In 2009, recognizing a severe lack of accessible artistic programming in the neighbourhoods surrounding our theatres, Canadian Stage built partnerships with Toronto Community Housing to offer two *Art in Leadership* sessions each year. Each session involves ten weeks of creative workshops for youth living in nearby social housing units. Led by professional guest artists, the workshops use creative tools to build the confidence, motivation and leadership skills needed to bridge the opportunity gap for low-income urban youth. After a period of development and rehearsal, the group performs a showcase for family, friends and members of the public in our Berkeley Street Theatre.

In order to build a bridge from these youths' community to ours, *Art in Leadership* sessions run in local community centers and are dependent on the support of youth outreach workers. Since last Fall I have personally been working closely with youth outreach workers in Ward 28 from Wellesley, Regent Park and John Innes Community Centres. Their expertise has allowed me to engage the best-suited youth for the opportunity and to gain their trust immediately. Equally important, the support of these youth workers has allowed our facilitators and staff greater focus on the artistic content of the program while they assist with attendance and behavioral issues. The result is impactful programming that provides youth with transferrable skills for future professional and recreational situations.

From my experience, it is unquestionably clear that these youth outreach workers are incomparably respected by their peers, not to mention exceptionally devoted to assisting their community in developing lifelong skills. I recognize the essential service that these individuals perform and value the need for these jobs to continue in our city's communities. The connections that the youth workers make in their communities as well as the positive influences they impart among community members is necessary advantage for at-risk youth in our city. It is impossible to believe that fewer people could successfully accomplish what all of these hard-working staff currently go above and beyond to do.

So, it is with this information that I hope you will reconsider and save these important leaders in the community. I look forward to continuing successful youth programs at Canadian Stage with their, and your, support.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Schachter

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About Canadian Stage:

Founded in 1987, Canadian Stage is one of the country's leading not-for-profit contemporary theatre companies. Our company presents multidisciplinary theatre with a focus on emerging performance styles that integrate theatre with other artistic mediums such as dance, film, visual arts and more. Sharing innovative and vibrant theatre from Canada and around the world, we stage an annual season of works at three major venues (the Bluma Appel Theatre, the Berkeley Street Theatre and the High Park Amphitheatre) and run a series of artist development and education initiatives as well as youth and community outreach programs.