

FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Appoints New Executive Director

31 March 2020 - The Board of Directors of the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre (PAC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Colleen Smith as the organization's new Executive Director. Ms. Smith will play a critical role in supporting the arts community as we deal with the effects of COVID-19. Ms. Smith will commence her role as Executive Director on Monday 4 May 2020.

"It is an interesting time to begin a new role, however I am encouraged by the dedicated staff, board members, and community," said Smith. "The FirstOntario PAC has a bright future ahead of it and it will be because of the support of the community that we will come back from this stronger than ever."

Ms. Smith comes to the FirstOntario PAC with over 12 years of senior management experience in performing arts centres. Ms. Smith has leadership experience from Theatre Calgary, Massey Hall, Roy Thompson Hall and The Factory Theatre.

"The hiring committee were not naive to the uncertainty and challenges that lie ahead given this unprecedented time," says Mario De Divitiis, Board Chair of the FirstOntario PAC. "We felt this difficult time only validated our decision to act decisively and courageously to bring another proven leader to the Niagara Region. I have no doubt that Colleen will inject her leadership into the PAC quickly and become a community leader within Niagara as we all cope with COVID-19."

Ms. Smith said her priority will be to speak with the staff of the PAC and learn of the struggles facing the organization and the arts community during this difficult time. "I'm confident that there is a wealth of talent with great ideas on how we can best move forward together. The FirstOntario PAC has a strong foundation to further engage people in exceptional performing arts experiences that will enrich the lives of St. Catharines and Niagara residents. I'm looking forward to building on the PAC's many strengths as we work together to combat the effects of COVID-19."

Since opening in 2014, the FirstOntario PAC has seen much momentum and growth. "Colleen is well poised to lead the organization toward a robust financial, operational and strategic future," De Divitiis continues. "She is eager to build on this momentum by working with our incredible staff, the Niagara arts community, local businesses and residents of Niagara to support the incredible work accomplished."

The Board of Directors of the FirstOntario PAC underwent a thorough recruitment process for the position of Executive Director. A hiring committee was created to develop the job description, review applications and interview selected applicants. The hiring committee was comprised of Board members of the FirstOntario PAC and members of the Executive team of the City of St. Catharines. The Board of Directors would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank David Oakes, Acting Executive Director and the PAC leadership team consisting of Sara Palmieri, Programming and Marketing Manager, Carlos Robayo, Administrative Supervisor and Kathleen Ross, Operations Administrator for their leadership and energy during this transitional period.

For interviews, please contact:

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About the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre

The FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre is a 95,000 square foot cultural complex comprised of four state-of-the-art performance venues that host a signature presentation of international and local performing artists. Designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects, the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre plays a vital role in the renaissance of downtown St. Catharines, serving as the catalyst in modernizing the area and reinforcing the brilliance of Niagara region's diverse cultural cluster.