



+ POSITIVE DISPATCH

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MasQueerade!

We are very excited announce that, on July 9th, we are hosting *MasQueerade: A Queer Community Dance!* What better way to kick off Pride season than to gather your nearest and dearest queers, throw on your best look (maybe a costume?), and dance all night long! A shout out to our presenting sponsor

MasQueerade features some of Halifax's best entertainers! Local drag legend and trans activist Elle Noir will serve as one of the fabulous co-hostesses for the evening. A three-time consecutive winner of Halifax's Best Drag Performer, Elle Noir knows a thing or two about putting on a show. Accompanying Elle as co-hostess is the spectacular Cynthia Stilts! Cynthia is nothing short of a show-stopping performer, known her for her humour and beauty she will undoubtedly show us all a good time!

Along with our wonderful Drag Hostesses, *MasQueerade* features some incredible DJ's! Andahriel and DJ Tranzishan are sure to provide some great music to keep you dancing all through the night!

We will also have fabulous door prizes! Currently at a combined value of over \$1200, the prize features a variety of products from local businesses like Venus Envy, Black Market Boutique and more, as well as gift certificates and a \$250 flight voucher! *MasQueerade* will be an accessible space with gender-neutral washrooms alongside a sober/chill space for anyone looking to break away from the crowd for a moment.

For a chance to win tickets to *MasQueerade*, head over to

our Instagram and Facebook where we have been holding ticket giveaways every Friday leading up to the event! All you need to do for a chance to win is like our contest post and follow us!

Tickets are \$25 or \$20 for underwaged pricing, tax and service fees included. Don't miss out on one of the gayest & queerest nights of the year! Get your tickets for *MasQueerade* NOW at www.tinyurl.com/MasQueeradeDance.

Volunteers Needed 4 Pride!

Pride season is upon us and, with all the fun also comes a lot for us to do. So we are looking for some spectacular volunteers to lend a hand with all of our events!

The first event we have coming up is our July 9th *MasQueerade: A Queer Community Dance*. *MasQueerade* is bound to be an incredible night and we need your help to make it just that. We are looking for folks to help us set up and take down the event, help check and sell tickets at the door, and also help us run our sober/chill space!

Our next event is our Pride BBQ! We are looking for folks to help our prepare food and beverages, take payment, and help with tasks around the booth. The pride BBQ is taking place on the Halifax Pride Parade Day, July 16th!

We also need some talented folks to help us put together our Pride float! If you have an eye for design,

this is your chance to help us put together a beautiful float for the parade! Pride float prep will also take place on the day of pride, July 16th!

And, finally, we also need a volunteer or two for the HIV self-test Pop-Up booths on July 20th and/or 24th.

If you are interested in lending us a hand on any of these days, send us an email at walk@acns.ns.ca.



A shout out to our Presenting Sponsor: **Gilead Canada**, and our Gold Sponsor: **ViiV Healthcare**.

Gilead Canada Presents
A Queer Community Dance

MasQueerade

Costumes Not Required!

Costumes Welcome!

Featuring:



Elle Noir



Cynthia Stilts



DJ Tranzishøn



Andahriel

Tickets \$25 / \$20 Underwaged

(tax + service charges included in prices)

www.tinyurl.com/MasQueeradeDance



Saturday, July 9, 9 PM - 2 AM

The McInnes Room, 6136 University Ave., Kijipuktuk (Halifax)

in support of the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia

Presenting Sponsor:



Gold Sponsor:



ACNS Renewed?

ACNS is overdue for a refresh ...

Back in 2018-2019, the ACNS staff and Board of Directors had gone through a detailed strategic planning process to assess the direction of the organization in both the short-and-long-term. We looked at the work we have been doing, the work we want to be doing, the challenges and opportunities that new developments in HIV treatment and prevention have presented, and we especially looked at the challenges and opportunities that changes in funding for programs have presented.

HIV-specific funding – at both the provincial and federal level – continues to shrink each and every year! In addition, fund-raising for all charities continues to get more and more

challenging as the fundraising landscape has grown increasingly crowded and competitive.

Out of that strategic planning process, new ideas and directions emerged that we need to discuss with our clients and the populations we already serve... as well as the populations we may be adding to our service!

To finalize this process, we were planning on doing in-person consultations across Nova Scotia in the spring of 2020. COVID-19 interrupted that process. This spring we will be re-launching that consultation process – however much of that will be virtual.

First off, we want to be clear that we are not planning on giving up any of the HIV support and prevention programs and services we currently offer. **ACNS will continue to address HIV issues for all priority populations in NS.** However, to survive (or even thrive!) and be able to offer those HIV-specific services, we need a broader foundation. Also, we've long been aware of the obvious overlaps and synergies between HIV work and broader 2SLGBTQIA health work.

ACNS wants to hear your thoughts and input on this proposal and we're hoping to have in-depth discussions about how we can best serve our communities moving forward. Our community consultations will include an HIV+ client focus group, and a series of broader 2SLGBTQIA+ consultations.

If you would like to be part of this consultation process, please email Chris at ED@acns.ns.ca and put "Community Consultation" in the subject line. Thanks!



AGM—Delayed Until September



The Annual General Meeting of the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia (ACNS) will be held on Thursday, Sep 15. The location is yet to be confirmed. The meeting will begin at 6:00 pm, with registration at 5:30 pm. For

more information contact Chris.

Join the ACNS Board

The Board of Directors of ACNS is looking for new members. People living with HIV/AIDS are especially encouraged to apply. People interested in being considered should contact Chris by Tuesday, Sep 2, 2022 to express their interest.



Manna for Health Stays Open!

Since it was brought to our attention that Manna for Health would be closing its doors, we have been working in conjunction with Manna volunteers, people from the St. John's United

Church, and other stakeholders to explore what options are available to keep Manna open for our HIV+ clients. We reached out to clients to hear their concerns and perspectives, which helped inform our work.

Thankfully, St. John's United is still interested in continuing this community outreach project and we are working to ensure that the transition from the current coordinators to the new coordinators is smooth.

We are grateful to both of the outgoing coordinators Kirby and Bob for their years of work at Manna. We are also

looking forward to continuing to work with incoming coordinators, Dave and Francis.

For updates on that, or if you require a referral to Manna for Health, please reach out to our Support Coordinator, Dylan.

The proposal which ACNS will be seeking feedback on is:

“to expand our mandate to address broader sexual health, mental health and substance use issues – and to do so for all 2SLGBTQIA+ Nova Scotians”.

This is the possible future that we wish to work towards. This is the proposal we now wish to present to our existing clients and HIV priority populations, as well as to the broader 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in NS.

YOU + U = U ... An Update

ACNS partnered with Sexual Health NS and Community-Based Research Centre to conduct a research project: *YOU+U=U*. Our project coordinators gathered participants for focus groups in order to discuss HIV prevention, including community understandings of Undetectable HIV = Untransmittable HIV, and barriers to healthcare in NS. They are currently in the process of taking the things they learned in the focus groups and putting together a community report. They'll also take what they learned and use it to develop some new U=U content. There will be more focus groups to review this content. Keep your eyes peeled! For more info contact Dylan.

HIV Self-Test Pop-Ups: Hfx + Syd



ACNS will be providing free HIV Self tests and info at Pride in Halifax and Sydney. Look for the Halifax Pop-Ups on Wed. July 20 in front of the Halifax Central Library, and at the July 24 Dykes + Divas Softball Game! We'll also be at the Aug 6 post-parade Rainbow Fair in Sydney. For details contact Dylan.

Client Phones

ACNS is aware that reaching staff and accessing services is hard without a phone. There is still a limited supply of prepaid cell phones available for our HIV+ clients who need a phone. If you already have a phone that ACNS has provided to you, additional minutes can also be made available for you. We have been successful in extending the funding for this program through several grants, so if you need minutes for your ACNS provided phone, get in touch ASAP. If you need a phone or minutes – or know of an ACNS client who does – please contact Dylan.

we have ...

Cell Phones & Minutes

ACNS still has cell phones and prepaid minutes for our HIV+ clients who need them



If you are, or know of, an ACNS client who needs a phone or minutes text/phone 902-403-7841



Funding provided by: the Gov. of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund and the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia; by the joint effort of the Atlantic Compassion Fund, the Gov. of Canada's New Horizons Seniors Program, Nova Scotia Power, EfficiencyOne, the Province of Nova Scotia and many generous corporate and individual donors; and by a Positive Action grant from ViiV Healthcare.



HIV Stigma Index Project

The HIV Stigma Index is still looking for people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Atlantic Canada to learn from your experiences. The team – made up of community-based representatives, service providers, and academics – is looking for PLHIV participants.

They want to collect info about the experiences of people living with HIV in regards to stigma, discrimination, and human rights. They want to use this information to inform healthcare best-practices, assist in policy development, and empower participants. All participants will be given a \$50 honorarium. People will also be provided \$30 for successful referrals.

To participate, contact Arthur Dave Miller at 1-877-347-1175 or Arthur.miller@unityhealth.to.

2SLGBTQIA+ Community Consultations



To explore the possibility... of expanding our mandate to include sexual health, mental health, and substance use issues for all 2SLGBTQIA+ Nova Scotians, ACNS will be seeking community input later this year.

If you are interested in being part of this process, please contact Chris at ED@acns.ns.ca and put "Community Consultations" in the subject line.

You can also head to www.tinyurl.com/ACNS-Consult for more information.



With Renewed Funding ... ACNS Welcomes New Staff!

After five very lean years with regard to federal funding, ACNS is rebuilding again. A key outcome of this is the hiring of new staff.

For 2022-2023, ACNS has partnered with CBRC (and funded by Health Canada - SUAP) for our first ever 2SLGBTQ+ Harm Reduction project. This one-year pilot is led by **Andrew Thomas** (who did a student placement with ACNS in 2021) as the Peer N Peer Coordinator, along with part-time Peer Outreach Workers **Marisa DiCosta** and **Jordan Parker**. Jordan is also continuing his internship with ACNS as our Fund Development lead and is assisted in that this summer by **Teddy Elphick**.

As part of our new 5-year PHAC CAF (HIV/STBBI prevention) grant, ACNS also welcomes **Shane Pope** as our new 2SGBQ+ Men's Health & Wellness lead and **Hanley Smith** as our first-ever 2ST-NB+ Folk Health & Wellness lead.

Andrew Thomas

Andrew (He/Him) is returning to ACNS as our new Peer n Peer (PnP) Coordinator. For the next year, he'll be leading our new peer-led 2SLGBTQIA+ substance use and sexual health program. Rooted in harm reduction principles, PnP meets folks where they're at on their substance use and sexual health journey. He brings with him lived experience with substance use and hopes to provide support to other queer people engaged in sexualized substance use. He had previously completed a field placement with us by re-working our Street Smarts program.

Marisa DiCosta

Marisa (They/Them) has joined ACNS as one of our Harm Reduction Peer Outreach workers. Marisa currently holds a practicing license with the Nova Scotia College of Nurses. Marisa also has a diploma in Counselling Skills and Social Human Services, which is where their passion for helping people through harm reduction outreach work began. They are keen to call upon both their mental health and addictions background and own lived experience as an openly queer, transgender, and non-binary person navigating N.S healthcare system, to inform their practice with ACNS.

Shane Pope

Shane (He/Him) is a proud queer gay man and the new Sexual Health Program Lead / Health and Wellness Coordinator for 2SGBQ+ Men's Programs at ACNS. He began his career in the field of HIV/AIDS, harm reduction and 2SLGBTQIA+ health with the AIDS Committee of NL in 2019. He recently relocated to Halifax and is looking forward to working with ACNS and exploring the province.

Hanley Smith

Hanley Smith (They/Them) is our Health and Wellness Coordinator for 2-Spirit, Trans and Non-Binary programs at ACNS. Hanley is a non-binary activist and leader in Nova Scotia's queer community. They have developed and implemented queer youth programs, and done award winning work caring for trans* youth throughout their many years of volunteer service. They are currently completing their bachelor's degree in psychology and a certificate in non-for-profit business from Mount Saint Vincent University.

Shane Pope



Teddy Elphick



Marisa DiCosta



Hanley Smith



Andrew Thomas



Jordan Parker

Teddy Elphick

Teddy (He/She/They) is the new Pride Programming Coordinator summer intern at ACNS. He is currently a student at Dalhousie University completing a degree in Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies, and has a passion for community-based work. Teddy also serves as President of DalOut, Dalhousie's 2SLGBTQ+ student society focused on advocating for queer students on campus and providing fun and uplifting queer spaces.

Jordan Parker

Although Jordan (He/Him) has been a familiar face at ACNS as its Fund Development Coordinator (intern) since last fall, we are also welcoming him on as a Harm Reduction Peer Outreach Worker for our Peer N Peer (PNP) project, where he will be working with Andrew and Marisa on the project.

ACNS Launches Peer N Peer Harm Reduction Pilot

ACNS is launching a peer support program -- called Peer n Peer -- that focuses on 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who engage in sexualized substance use; otherwise known as Chemsex or Party n Play (PnP). Peer n Peer is a program that has already been successful in Ottawa and Edmonton, and we will be working with them in developing our own program tailored to local needs.

PnP encompasses the use of substances such as Cocaine, MDMA (Ecstasy/Molly), Crystal Meth, GHB, Ketamine (Special K) and Mephedrone during sexual encounters. People engage in PnP for a variety of reasons and it has both positives and negatives associated with it. For some individuals, it is a positive part of their lives, while for others it can have negative consequences. The planned program aims to meet people where they are at with their substance use and provide support in the form of harm reduction supplies and education, informal counselling from people with lived experience, referrals, safer sex supplies, and STBBI testing information.

More info about the program can be found on our website at <https://acns.ns.ca/progs-services/peer-n-peer.html>. There is also a link to www.mybuzz.ca where people can complete an assessment of their substance use and sexual activities to help



determine the impact it may be having upon their lives. Included with this is a live chat function where people can discuss their substance use and sexual health with one of our peer support workers who can help with resources and referrals. The program is officially launching July 9 at *MasQueerade!*

Monkeypox & G/B/Q Men

There is presently an outbreak of a relatively rare disease called Monkeypox. The World Health Organization has confirmed 5800 cases in worldwide. In Canada, most cases of the 300 cases are among gay and bisexual men in Quebec, Ontario, BC and Alberta. With Pride festivals now under way, spread of the virus is predicted and it is important to be aware of the risks, symptoms and what can be done to prevent it. The Public Health Agency of Canada is working with provinces, territories and the [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int) to actively monitor the situation. ACNS has been in contact with provincial Public Health to stay on top of developments in Nova Scotia.

Monkeypox is a virus that belongs to the same genus as smallpox. It is spread through close contact with an infected person. It can be transmitted by respiratory droplets like saliva and mucus. It can also be transmitted by skin-to-skin contact and there is new research suggesting possible transmission through semen. Monkeypox is not as easily transmittable as COVID-19 and requires extended close contact with an infected person. We are still learning about this disease and it is important to lookout for new research and protocols as they are released.

Monkeypox has a two-week incubation period. Symptoms include:

- fever
- rash
- headache
- muscle aches
- exhaustion
- swollen lymph nodes
- sores.

Symptoms usually appear 6-to-13 days after exposure, but they can also develop up to 21 days after exposure. A rash may begin on the face and then spread to other body parts, developing into raised bumps that then become filled with fluid or pus. If you have an unexplained rash, go to the doctor. Monkeypox has a low mortality rate of 3-6% according to the World Health Organization but no deaths have been reported yet in Western countries.

Monkeypox does not appear to be any more severe in HIV positive individuals, particularly those on medication with a suppressed viral load.

The best way to prevent monkeypox is by washing hands, wearing a mask, covering coughs/sneezes and limiting sexual partners. The smallpox vaccine is effective against monkeypox; however, routine vaccination ended in 1972. For those vaccinated before 1972, it's difficult to determine how much protection it provides after 50 years. Monkeypox is not as severe as smallpox. However, if you develop a fever then a rash seek medical attention. For more info contact Shane.

An infographic titled 'HIV is Different Now' with three main facts presented in colored ovals. Fact #1 (blue oval) states: 'The new HIV self-test allows you to get results in 2 minutes in the comfort of your own home'. Fact #2 (yellow oval) states: 'With early diagnosis and treatment, most HIV+ people will never get AIDS and will have a typical life-expectancy'. Fact #3 (red oval) states: 'U=U* means there is zero risk of passing on HIV via sex if you are on effective treatment'. At the bottom, it says '* Undetectable HIV = Untransmittable HIV'. Logos for 'Know Your Status!', 'AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia', and 'ViiV Healthcare' are included, along with the website 'www.tinyurl.com/HIVisDif'.

CATS Updates

The CATS program is still up and running. We are currently booking appointments with our volunteer massage therapists and osteopath. Our acupuncturist has suspended appointments for the moment because of new job commitments. We are also continuing to seek other practitioners to further expand the



number of appointments available and will be providing updates as needed.

For more info and/or to book an appointment, contact Dylan.

Sex Now 2022 @ Pride

Sex Now is returning to Halifax! Sex Now is Canada's largest and longest running health survey of gay, bisexual, queer, and trans men and Two-Spirit and non-binary people (GBT2Q). After several years online, 2022 is the first time that recruitment will happen in person since 2018 when ACNS was happy to help recruit during Halifax Pride.

This year the survey is available in several languages (English, French, and Spanish) and is being offered at Pride festivals in every province! Sex Now is administered by the Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC, <http://cbrc.net>) – a national non-profit that promotes the health of people of diverse sexualities and genders through research and intervention development.

Sex Now recruiters will be at three events during Halifax Pride: Friday, July 15 at the Bear Ball at the Atlantica Hotel; Saturday, July 16 and Sunday, July 17 at the health and wellness area at the Halifax Pride Festival Grounds from 1 to 4.

What does participating in Sex Now get you? Beyond the altruistic tendency to help community-driven research that could impact policies affecting 2SLGBTQIA+ health in Canada, you also receive \$10 (in cash!) for participating in the survey. You also get a fun dog tag to wear...

And the opportunity to get two HIV self-testing kits. Each participant of Sex Now can opt in to the secondary study, Test Now to receive two kits right then and there. You can use them yourself or pass them on to others.

Want to get an HIV self-test kit but can't make it to Halifax Pride? Remember that ACNS is part of I'm Ready and free self test kits are available as part of that ongoing research program as well. To find out more about Sex Now, you can check out the website at <https://www.cbrc.net/sexnow>.



FREE HIV Self Tests Available

ACNS is a partner in the national *I'm Ready* HIV self-testing research program! Participants will receive an HIV self-testing kit – which is proven to be fast and highly effective – and have access to a telehealth-style peer navigation service to link them to more info about prevention and care.

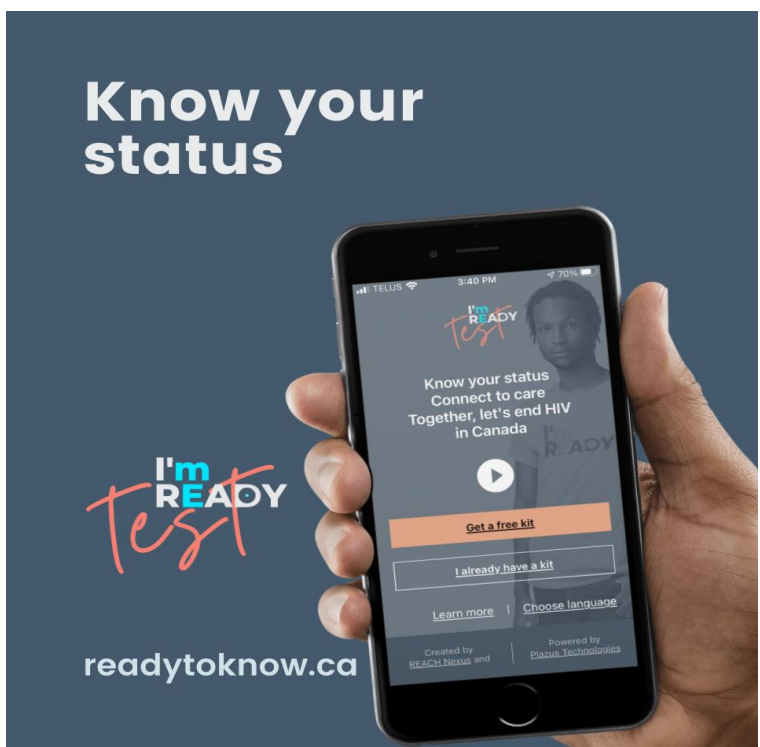
To participate in the program, participants will need an iOS or Android smart phone to download the *I'm Ready* mobile app, which users can access anonymously. Through the app, participants will be asked to create a profile and answer a pre-test survey. Participants can choose to have up to three self-test kits delivered to their home or another address, or opt to pick up kits at any one of 75 pickup locations across the country – ACNS being one of these distribution partners.

Once a participant has their self-test kit, they will follow the steps in the app and use the test kit's instructions to take the self-test. After the test is completed, they will anonymously record their results in the app and receive access to more information about treating or preventing HIV.

At any time before, during or after the test, participants can also book a free, confidential appointment with a peer navigator through the *I'm Ready*, Talk secure telehealth service. The peer navigator will guide participants through the testing process and provide information and services for HIV

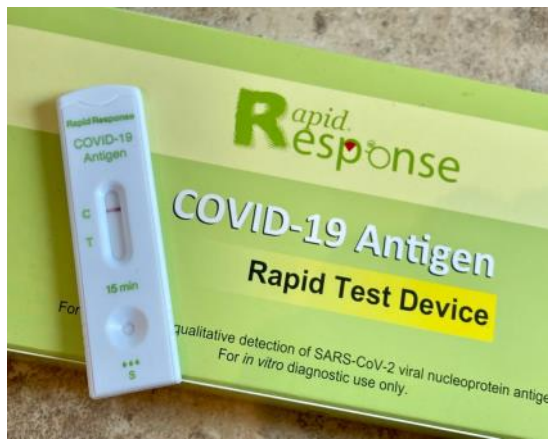
care and prevention.

More information is available at <https://www.readytoknow.ca/>.



Free COVID Tests & Masks

COVID-19 rapid tests and Masks are available for our clients and members of the public, and can be picked up at the ACNS office. If you cannot come into the office, we can make alternate arrangements. We would like to thank The Canadian Red Cross for sending out these supplies. For more info contact Dylan.



Massage Clinic

The Invisible Illness Clinic (formerly the Carnation Massage Clinic) at the Canadian College of Massage and Hydrotherapy continues to offer massage therapy services for people living with chronic conditions, including HIV. CCMH students are introduced to many health conditions, including those that are less visible to many of us. These 'invisible illnesses' can benefit greatly from the physiological and psychological effects of therapeutic touch.

Call 902.832.3268 or email cliniccoordinator@collegeofmassage.com to book an appointment. Appointments are \$20. The College is located in Suite 180, 6960 Mumford Road, Halifax.

What's Going On?

July

- Thu Jul 1 (Canada Day) - **ACNS CLOSED**
- Sat Jul 9, Halifax
MasQueerade - A Queer Community Dance
See [page 1](#) for details (and [ad page 2](#)) or contact **Jordan**
- Jul 11 - **ACNS CLOSED—except for scheduled appointments**
- Jul 14-24, Halifax
Halifax Pride Festival
For Halifax Pride info <http://halifaxpride.com>
- Jul 18 - **ACNS CLOSED**
- Jul 20 & 24, Halifax
ACNS HIV Self-Test Pop-Ups @ Halifax Pride
See [page 4](#) for details or contact **Dylan**

August

- Mon Aug 1 (Natal Day) - **ACNS CLOSED**
- Sat Aug 6, Sydney
ACNS HIV Self-Test Pop-Ups @ Cape Breton Pride
See [page 4](#) for details or contact **Dylan**

September

- Mon Sep 5 (Labour Day) - **ACNS CLOSED**
- Thu Sep 15, Virtual + Halifax?
ACNS Annual General Meeting
See [page 2](#) for details or contact **Chris**

Want to Contribute

We would love to hear from you! If you know of events coming up, or have any info you would like to share, contact **Chris**.

Staff Directory

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Our Funders

Funding Partners

- Public Health Agency of Canada (CAF)
- Health Canada (SUAP) through a partnership with CBRC
- NS Department of Health & Wellness
- NS Department of Advanced Education and Labour
 - ViiV Healthcare Canada (Positive Action Grant)
 - The J&W Murphy Foundation
- Nova Scotia General Employee's Union (NSGEU)
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Main Corporate & Business Supporters

- Admiral Insurance
- BMO Financial Group
- ViiV Healthcare Canada
- Gilead Sciences Canada, Inc.
- Westjet - Docaitta Design - RBC
- MAC Cosmetics / MAC AIDS Fund - The Atlantica Halifax