

## STATEMENT FROM FRIENDS FOR LIFE REGARDING 'ART FOR LIFE' CHARITY FUNDRAISER VENUE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

The Vancouver Friends for Life Society today announced that the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Art For Life Fine Art Auction will be unaffected by the current labour dispute between Teamsters Local 31 and the Great Canadian Railtour Company Ltd (Rocky Mountaineer).

Art For Life, an annual fundraising event benefiting the Vancouver Friends For Life Society, has been booked at the Rocky Mountaineer Station since February – five months prior to the current labour dispute. Art For Life raises much-needed funds for Friends For Life, a charity dedicated to providing health services to those living with life-threatening illnesses like HIV/AIDS and cancer.

Friends For Life staff and volunteers have been in productive, collaborative conversation with the Union Executive about the venue since this summer. The leadership team of Teamsters local 31 have assured Friends For Life that guests attending the Art For Life charity fundraiser will not have picket lines will not be put in place for the Art For Life charity fundraiser.

“We actively explored the feasibility of moving the event, and looked at 10 possible venues of similar size and capacity,” explained Sheena Sargeant, Executive Director of Friends For Life. “Many of these venues required us to cancel secured contracts, such as catering or audio/visual, each of which resulted in cancellation fees or loss of deposits already paid. In the end, moving our event would mean a loss of \$25,000-\$55,000 for Friends For Life, which would certainly result in program cuts to those living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.”

“We still encourage charities not to use these facilities during the labour dispute by seeking other venues but understand that due to the short notice from the Employer it has proven extremely difficult for many groups,” stated Rod Blackburn, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters 31 in an October 26 e-mail to Friends For Life.

“We thank Teamsters 31 for their gracious understanding of our situation,” concluded Sargeant. “They have recognized the important role Art For Life plays in our efforts to provide care to those living with HIV/AIDS and cancer.”

The charity has agreed not to book their 2012 signature gala at the Rocky Mountaineer Station unless the management and staff can reach a mutually-satisfactory agreement, and has invited affected members to offer informational material to guests outside the venue.

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For the media:

Sheena Sargeant  
[sheena@friendsforlife.ca](mailto:sheena@friendsforlife.ca)  
604 338 9697 mobile