



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Friendship Centre Core Operating Funding Stagnant in Provincial Budget**

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**St. John's, NL** – Following the release of “Change is in the Air”, the 2022 Provincial Budget, First Light is questioning the funding available to Friendship Centres in the province.

\$30,000 is earmarked for First Light St. John's Friendship Centre, the same amount for the People of the Dawn Indigenous Friendship Centre and the Labrador Friendship Centre.

“At First Light we receive \$30,000 core funding from the province, which accounts for less than 1% of our 7 million dollar annual budget,” said Stacey Howse, Executive Director of First Light. “We service tens of thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the St. John's area through programs that enrich lives, revitalize culture, provide employment, empower youth, and contribute to the economy,” she added, “While we appreciate the support we receive from the province, in a year with increased spending we would have liked to see an increase in our core funding to aid in the work we do to build community.”

Friendship Centres were on the frontlines of every major event during the last two years and well before, including acting as a key contributor to COVID-19 responses, contributing to local economies, responding to emergencies, urban Indigenous health crises, addressing racism – all while delivering ongoing cultural, economic, legal, and social supports that Indigenous people have come to expect.

“The work that Friendship Centres do is invaluable. The province could also support urban Indigenous communities by inviting us to be included in conversations with elected Indigenous leaders,” concluded Howse.

First Light is a registered non-profit that has been serving both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in St. John's since 1983. One of over 125 Friendship Centres, First Light provides programs and services rooted in the revitalization, strengthening, and celebration of Indigenous cultures and languages in the spirit of trust, respect, and friendship.

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