

December 6, 2016
Hamilton Mayor and City Council
Hamilton City Hall
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

SUBJECT: Chamber Support for Music Strategy Implementation Recommendations Before Council on December 7, 2016

Dear Mayor and Councillors:

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce fully supports ongoing efforts by the City of Hamilton and myriad community partners to capitalize on the strengths of our unique and growing local music sector.

We are among a large chorus of organizations that recognizes the significant role music production and consumption play in modern city-building. And we have teamed up with other supporters keen to position and promote Hamilton as a leading centre for “all things music.”

We congratulate you and city staff for leading the advancement of a made in Hamilton cultural industries program that includes a special focus on music. Recent municipal investments in the development of a sector-driven Hamilton Music Strategy have placed our community at the forefront of the music cities movement on the rise worldwide.

Last month we partnered with Tourism Hamilton and others to mark progress to-date at our chamber’s fourth annual Ambitious City event titled “Showtime for Hamilton’s Music Strategy.” The evening featured a keynote address by Graham Henderson, President of Music Canada and Chair of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and an expert panel moderated by radio legend Alan Cross.

The discussion drew on Mr. Henderson’s international experience in spearheading the formation of music cities yet was solidly grounded in a Hamilton context.

Five key takeaways from that event speak to the core reasons our chamber actively supports the Hamilton Music Strategy as a tool for city-wide economic development and is eager to see it succeed:

1. **Solid Business Backing:** The Canadian and Ontario Chambers of Commerce are vocal advocates for cultural industries in general and the music sector in particular. These leading business organizations regard music (especially at the local level) as a key contributor to jobs (direct and indirect) and quality of life. Both organizations are now distributing a chamber-endorsed Music Cities Toolkit to communities across Canada. Clearly music has become a vital element of mainstream economic practice.

2. **A Growing Movement:** Hamilton is among a cohort of nine forward-looking Canadian communities that have developed a music city strategy as part of a comprehensive plan to spur local economic development and neighbourhood renewal. In our view, these communities, along with Hamilton, are promoting progressive city-building by connecting the dots between culture, commerce and revenue creation.
3. **Talent Attraction and Retention:** Evidence shows that today's top talent is clustering in select urban centres that boast a rich array of cultural assets, including a vibrant and diverse music scene. We support additional investments in promoting Hamilton's distinct music advantage to attract and retain highly skilled workers necessary to drive future economic development.
4. **Community-Wide Economic Spin-Offs:** A growing number of cities are reporting economic spin-off benefits from music-related activities ranging from concerts and festivals to the aggregate effects of cultural districts. In Hamilton, signature events like Supercrawl and Festival of Friends are cited to contribute more than \$15 million annually to the local economy. This translates into added business for local companies and increased revenues to fund municipal services.
5. **Local Tourism:** Investments in the development of a local music scene help strengthen a city's value proposition for tourism. We support Hamilton's efforts to leverage our live music venues (100 and counting) and award-winning festivals as a key component of marketing our city as a special tourist destination.

We wish to voice support for the city staff report dated July 12, 2016 outlining recommendations intended to help ensure that the Hamilton Music Strategy gets implemented and delivers on its full potential as a driver of economic and social development.

In addition to our general support, we specifically back recommendations to:

- a) Form a Hamilton Music Industry Working Committee focused on the growth, viability and competitiveness of this sector of our local economy;
- b) Approve a city budget enhancement of \$25,000 to help fund marketing efforts that will help firmly establish Hamilton as a city of music; and,
- c) Develop a business plan needed to put an emerging Hamilton music industry partnership on a sound financial footing moving forward.

Our chamber remains keen to support the efforts of the proposed Music Industry Working Committee as it carries out its mandate.

We believe the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, through this newly-expanded working committee, can provide tangible support in several areas that could benefit from our strengths as Hamilton's leading business association committed to community-wide city-building.

For example, we are prepared to assist with crafting the proposed music industry business plan. We recognize the need for a nuts and bolts game plan to achieve specific targets that align with City Council approved goals for economic and social development. And we understand the need for a stable financial foundation required to ensure that the work of the committee is sustainable in the long run. Our Chamber is ready to support this work as requested.

The Hamilton Chamber is also committed to work with the music committee to leverage our provincial and national networks, including the Canadian and Ontario Chambers of Commerce. As noted earlier, Music Canada — a leader in the promotion of music cities around the world — has developed a Music Cities Toolkit specifically for local chambers across Canada. It is packed with proven approaches to help unlock and grow the economic and social value of the music industry at the local level.

This toolkit, combined with access to music city practitioners throughout Canada and beyond, will be valuable as we move our local plans forward. Again, we are eager to put this capacity to work through our local music industry working committee.

Equally, the Hamilton Chamber will continue to support the aims of the Hamilton Music Strategy through our communication channels. We routinely lend our capabilities to back countless music-related events and initiatives across Hamilton. Looking ahead, we anticipate a growing need to promote the fruits of Hamilton's music sector, and the Chamber is here to help.

We recognize that our municipality is under pressure to address many problems with limited resources. Notwithstanding this reality, we view our local music industry as a valuable asset that can be deployed to generate jobs, prosperity and quality of life — outcomes that fully match the strategic goals of our city. And we strongly encourage City Council to remain fully invested in a music city program set to deliver ever increasing results.

Sincerely,

Keanin Loomis
President and CEO
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce