



Mayor and Members of Council.

Dear Sirs and Madames:

We were asked to provide the committee with some observations from the point of view of a Hamilton based entrepreneurial business. We are happy to do so.

Despite the familiarity of the store and its facade on Main Street, there are many Hamiltonians who know little about our business. Milli has been in Hamilton since 1964, operating out of its current location on Main Street West at Pearl Street for all but its first year. We are an “old style” bricks and mortar enterprise offering a wide variety of womens' fashion products sourced from Canadian and international suppliers and we employ twelve women and one man; most of whom have career positions. We service a wide range of clients from Hamilton and the surrounding environs some of whose parents and grandparents have also shopped at Milli. Our family is proud of the philanthropic contributions we have made to the city of Hamilton over the years and it is the success of our business that has enabled us to do so.

Retail is the subject of hot debate in the media of late. Many have predicted the demise of our type of small local retail business as many people now shop in big box stores or national department stores that offer ubiquitous brand selection and discount pricing to attract customers. Others are moving to online shopping as they enjoy the anonymity of a computer screen and at home convenience. While these options gain popularity, consider the repercussions if this became the only option as small retail businesses get squeezed out by larger competitors and high rental rates. These theorists fail to recognize the enduring appeal of individually owned enterprises which provide individual and dedicated customer service while keeping shopping dollars in our local community. Very little of the money spent in the malls and big box stores stays in our city and focusing on big box stores and malls has a direct and negative effect on our cityscape.

Why is it paramount that Council participate further in promoting and assisting both well established industries and newer entrepreneurial enterprises in our city? First of all we are all aware that Hamilton has woken from a years-long slumber. We are shaking off the lure of heaven industry that held a grip on us for many years and provided much prosperity in the past; looking to the future requires population and business diversity and new employment opportunities. The creative set are often the first to discover the framework for future success. Beginning with artists who find beauty in decay and are

able to imagine what many of us in other pursuits cannot – until they reveal it and we begin to understand their vision. Add another layer of film and music and you can start to form a natural synergy and vibrancy for those who live nearby. These industries are incubators for future development. They lay the groundwork for a creative process that, if allowed to expand, can become contagious leading to a wide range of new businesses.

Hamilton needs a variety of skills and workers. As a high service provider, for example, we have challenges to find those skilled in sewing to do our intricate work and while our local programmes may not think that fashion is a business worth pursuing, we beg to differ. The creative process and business opportunities exist hand in hand. We can point to great current successes like Canada Goose a company that employs approximately 1000 people in Canada with distribution worldwide and Arc'teryx based in Vancouver that employs over 500.

As Hamiltonians we understand heavy industry. It's Hamilton's backbone. Our vision of our city's future development includes Council's support for softer industries too and we are grateful for the opportunity to engage in this dialogue with you. We invite you to drop by the store at some point to learn a little bit more about our business.

Sincerely,
Ben Gould
Milli Ltd.