



# CANADIAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS

An Organization of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada

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To The Mayor and Council, City of Hamilton,

## **RE: FAIR PAYMENT FOR MUSICIANS**

Let me begin by stating that this letter is written on behalf of the 17,000 Canadian members of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada (AFM), who wish to express their sincere appreciation for the progressive thinking and actions by the City of Hamilton. I would like to share some information, which may be of interest.

The entertainment industry in Canada (with its many derivatives), represents a greater impact on the economy than mining, lumber and tourism *combined*. When musicians earn money, they spend it on local services and businesses, a fact which I'm sure your research has uncovered. The old adage, "A rising tide lifts all boats", is very apropos in this context.

The AFM is the largest entertainment union in the world, and operates in Canada as the Canadian Federation of Musicians (CFM). We are certified in Canada, under the federal *Status of the Artist Act*, as the sole bargaining agent for ALL musicians (not just members), which entitles us to compel entities such as CBC, National Film Board, and the National Arts Centre etcetera to negotiate, with a view to establishing scale agreements under which all musicians may confidently render services.

We also bargain agreements for symphony orchestras, theatres, touring, commercial announcements (jingles), TV/Film/New Media and the major recording labels. Negotiations is one of the core services of any labour union, but it may surprise you that musicians, on average, have a much higher education than the median within the work force, having achieved a university degree or better. They begin training early in life, spend a fortune on lessons, instruments and equipment, and like professional athletes, must practice daily to maintain the high physical and mental capacity required.

Conversely, a large majority of our members are part of the freelance, or "gig economy". They play to live audiences, create their own recordings and count on a steady stream of work to pay the bills. When the pandemic struck, this segment faced devastation. Many have left the business, while others found ways to subsist on the federal subsidies which were introduced.

This wasn't the first adversity. Thirty years ago, musicians were able to eke out a modest income through their live performance and selling CDs, along with royalties which emanate through airplay. Technology has destroyed that world, first with Napster inventing music piracy and file sharing, and now with streaming services like Spotify and YouTube paying

minute fractions of a cent per stream, with a system that is weighted to pay the only the top few artists the lion's share. Legislation worldwide is still playing catch up with Big Tech and their above-the-law attitude, including a mandate to exploit artists, expropriate their intellectual property in order own, control and monetize all content for little or no cost. Truly, they represent the worst example in history of insatiable corporate greed.

All of this, combined with a learned public perception that music is free or has no value, threatens to create a new reality where a career in the arts is no longer a viable choice, only untrained hobbyists remain, the cultural fabric of Canada being forever compromised.

For the elected officials of a community to recognize that arts and cultural workers represent an integral part of society, and must be engaged and remunerated as the highly-trained professionals they are, speaks volumes about their integrity and sense of responsibility. It also is indicative of an understanding of how ecosystems work. Similar to plants, which wither and die without water and sunlight, failure to support any portion of the workforce has a cascading, negative impact elsewhere. The City of Hamilton has addressed this, demonstrating the kind of foresight and leadership that other communities can strive to emulate.

Once again, thank you on behalf of all musicians, and we look forward to a very bright future of healthy collaboration, success and mutual benefit.

Respectfully,



Alan Willaert  
Vice-President from Canada  
American Federation of Musicians  
of the United States and Canada