

From: Christopher Stanton <christopher@hftco.ca>

Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 2:35 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Cc: Wilson, Maureen <Maureen.Wilson@hamilton.ca>

Subject: GIC Budget Committee - Christopher Stanton - HFTco - Written Delegation (deferred from Jan 19 GIC meeting)

Hello to the team at the Office of the City Clerk.

I had planned to give a delegation at yesterday's GIC Budget meeting, but unfortunately didn't make it in on time last Friday to make the list.

I am therefore providing my planned delegation here in writing:

Good afternoon Mayor Horwath, Councillor Wilson, members of Council, and City Staff — thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

And thank you for your work on this draft budget in a particularly challenging year.

My name is Christopher Stanton, and I'm the Executive Director of Hamilton Festival Theatre Company, HFTco — producers of the Hamilton Fringe Festival.

I had the pleasure of addressing Council last month at this same committee in the context of the draft Downtown Revitalization plan, sharing the good news about the 2025 Hamilton Fringe Festival, and its impact on the local economy and on the perceived safety of Hamilton.

I said then that cultural programming is more than window dressing. They are essential infrastructure — around which we can rebuild how residents and visitors feel about the downtown core — how they interact and engage with Hamilton as a whole — and a proven economic driver.

Through this council's support — an investment of \$60,000 through the City Enrichment Fund — Hamilton Fringe 2025 saw a 67% jump in attendance to just under 30,000, resulting in an induced visitor spend of over \$3.5M sent directly into our City's economy.

That's a hell of a return on your investment.

And as my colleague Kelly Straughn from Theatre Aquarius noted through the data she presented — it's not just us. Across all organizations that make up the membership of the Hamilton Arts & Culture Collective — and beyond — report after report indicates the proven economic return of public investment in arts.

Not to mention the cultural value, the sense of pride in our vibrant city that Hamilton's arts and culture sector makes possible.

Council has rightly recognized the critical role the CEF has in this conversation.

In February 2023, Council voted 16-0 to approve an increase to the CEF, and asked:

“That staff be directed to bring forward further City Enrichment Fund (CEF) proposed increases for Council consideration for the years 2024 to 2028 with a goal to reach a total amount of \$9,661,430 by 2028.”

Council followed through with 8% increases in 2024 & 2025, bringing total investment in the CEF up to \$6.7M. Those increases, and your continued support through the CEF, has allowed organizations like ours to continue the work we do, and to contribute to the shared work of enriching the city’s cultural, social, and civic life.

However, despite this budget item being a “Council referred item,” we noticed that in the current draft budget, there is no increase to the CEF.

That would be a freeze in funding not just for the arts, but all the crucial sectors of this City directly funded through the CEF — Agriculture, Communities Culture & Heritage, Community Services, Digital, Environment, and Sport & Active Lifestyles.

HFTco is fortunate enough to have received multi-year funding from the CEF, so any increase to this year’s budget won’t affect our organization directly.

But in the context of the incoming Downtown Revitalization plan, in a year of renewed growth in the arts and culture sector, in what we’re proudly branding the “Year of Music” — I’d like to encourage Council to continue the important work you’ve been doing in reaching that stated goal of 9.6M by 2028.

Let me know if there are further steps I should take to ensure this delegation gets to the rest of the GIC Budget Committee.

much thanks,

c.

Christopher Stanton (he/him)

Executive Director, HFTco



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Frost Bites – Feb 27-Mar 8, 2026

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