



September 9, 2026

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Emilie:

The Sound of Music Festival's Board of Directors presents to the City Of Burlington, our current asks in regard to COB loan repayment, City of Burlington support annually (grant), and a new vision of the festival going forward.

The SOM Board of Directors are asking for the following:

Loan repayment:

1. Full relief from the COB loan that is past due on Sept 1, 2025. The amount owed is \$225,000.00;
2. Full relief from the aged COB AP of approximately \$22,000.00 from previous festival seasons.

1 time emergency support payment:

3. A one time grant of \$200,000.00 in October 2025, to pay all open AP from last years festival vendors. These are local southern Ontario vendors.

Annual Grant Support:

4. Annual grant of \$350,000.00 in January 2026, and payable annually in the same amount, for each festival year going forward.

With this financial relief and commitment from the City, moving to a new paid entry format, with a smaller footprint of days, with lower overall costs (over 100k), we are confident that we will be able to have a successful and profitable festival in 2026 and beyond. We will be able to continue to the tradition of the SOM for years to come.

\*Note, this is a last resort for the SOM. Over the last 45 days, we have made numerous media announcements, TV appearances, online and in person radio interviews, social media posts x 100, to show the people of this community, and the business leaders of this community, the dire situation that we are in. We have received nothing but love for the festival and how it brings this community together every father's day weekend. It was exactly as we thought.

Unfortunately, the business community does not feel the same love. We have reached out to all leaders of commerce – local and far. Big and Small. Profit and not for profit – with the ask of help us continue. Be a partner. Make a difference. We have had zero dollars donated. This is where we are at. This is our only chance to keep the music alive.



## Recap of 2025 Festival – Economic Impact - and the new Festival starting in 2026

The 2025 Festival showed great promise with an all Canadian line up, cost reductions in place and great weather. We rolled out a new donation process at the entry and at the POS terminals. Not mandated, but optional to donate. A 50/50 draw was soft launched as well.

While the attendance and volunteers were at the levels of expectation ( and note zero injuries or police arrests ) the financial numbers were more than disappointing.

The optional donations were not received well. Most attendees walked past and the donation POS without a look. The rhetoric we hears was, “its free, why are you asking for money? “. We had anticipated 6 figures in our budget.

The 50/50 was limited in success -we has our summer students walking through the crowd – but with some IT issues to start on Thursday, we are a day behind and never go to the point of material impact.

The largest and most concerning downturn was on the on the alcohol sales. Thursday night, which is usually a big night for sales, was half of anticipated budget. Sunday was less than half of budget. This is a trend that we feel will continue with healthier lifestyles.

Saturday was the only night that budget was met If you were there, you saw the amount of people. It was more than I have ever seen.

## New for 2026 Plan - Key Highlights

- 1 Main Stage, 1 BPAC Community stage
- Battle of the Bands to continue with local emerging talent all year long
- 3 day festival – with 5pm start on Friday, 1pm Sat and Sunday
- 1 Parade remains, same as 2025
- Savings of potentially \$115k
- Mandatory daily entrance fee of \$5.00 per person, or 3 for \$20.00 per family
- Option to volunteer at festival if paid entry is not viable.
- Executive Director recruited and placed for 2026
- 2 SOM Board seats for City of Burlington Designees

Paid entry is 90% less than other Ontario Festivals that charge entry fees. Kerr Fest, Elora Festival, Tall Pines Gravenhurst – these are all comparable in talent, smaller size, but charge 5-10x what we are proposing.



Sincerely

Dave Shepherd, CHRE, ICD.D  
Chairperson – Burlington's Sound Of Music Festival

# Business Plan – Burlington Sound of Music Festival

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## 1. Executive Summary

The Burlington Sound of Music Festival (SOM) is Canada's largest free outdoor music festival, attracting over 400,000 **attendees annually** to the Burlington waterfront. For more than 45 years, SOM has been a pillar of cultural life in Burlington, showcasing Canadian talent, boosting the local economy, and creating lasting memories for families and music lovers. SOM relies on sponsorships, grants, and community support to deliver this high-quality, accessible event. While the festival has grown into a major tourism draw, it remains underfunded compared to its scale. This business plan outlines how SOM will build sustainability, deepen community partnerships, and provide exceptional value to funders and sponsors.

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## 2. Organizational Overview

- **Legal Structure:** Non-profit corporation, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.
  - **Mission:** To connect people through the power of music by delivering inclusive, and diverse programming that enriches Burlington and beyond.
  - **Vision:** To be recognized as a premier Canadian music festival that celebrates community, creativity, and culture.
  - **Track Record:** 45 years of operation, thousands of artists showcased, millions of attendees, and significant contributions to local tourism and business revenue.
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## 3. Festival Overview



**Location:** Spencer Smith Park, Burlington, ON

- **Duration:** Three days (with additional programming such as the BOTB, Opening day Kick-Off Concert and grande parade).
  - **Programming:** National Canadian headliners, emerging Canadian talent, local and regional acts, family zones, parade, food vendors, and community activities.
  - **Audience Profile:**
    - 60% Burlington/Halton residents ○ 40% visitors from across Ontario and beyond
    - Broad demographic appeal: families, youth, adults, seniors
  - **Economic & Social Impact:**
    - Generates millions in visitor spending (hotels, restaurants, shops).
    - Enhances and guarantees MAT tax revenue ○ Creates seasonal and part-time jobs. ○ Provides volunteer opportunities (over 1000 volunteers annually). ○ Enhances Burlington's reputation as a vibrant, cultural, waterfront city.
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## 4. Goals & Objectives

- **Cultural:** Showcase diverse music, including Indigenous, multicultural, and emerging artists.
  - **Community:** Keep the festival accessible to all, regardless of status or income.
  - **Economic:** Increase economic impact through tourism and local partnerships.
  - **Financial:** Develop a sustainable funding model, reducing over-reliance on single sources.
  - **Environmental:** leader in green initiatives (waste diversion, reusable cups, ecofriendly staging).
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## 5. Programming & Activities

- **Main Stages:** National and international headliners.
  - **Community & Family Zones:** Interactive activities, local musicians, youth-focused programming.
  - **Grande Festival Parade:** A long-standing tradition celebrating community spirit.
  - **Workshops & Collaborations:** Opportunities for youth musicians, schools, and cultural groups.
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## 6. Marketing & Promotion

- **Media Partnerships:** Strong local support from radio, print, and digital outlets.  
**Digital Strategy:** Active on social media, newsletter campaigns, and targeted online advertising.



- **Community Engagement:** School outreach, local business involvement, city partnerships.
  - **Sponsorship Visibility:** Naming rights, stage branding, on-site activations, digital promotion, exclusive hospitality experiences.
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## 7. Sponsorship & Funding Strategy

- **Sponsorship Packages:** Tiered offerings (Title Sponsor, Stage Sponsor, Community Partner, Local Business Friend).
  - **Sponsor Benefits:**
    - Exposure to 400,000+ attendees.
    - Media coverage (radio, print, digital).
    - Association with community pride, culture, and Canada's largest free festival.
    - Opportunities for on-site engagement with festivalgoers.
  - **Grant Funding:** Federal (Canadian Heritage), Provincial (Experience Ontario), Municipal (City of Burlington, Tourism Burlington).
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## 8. Operations & Logistics

- **Volunteers:** Over 1000 community volunteers annually.
  - **Safety:** Coordination with Burlington Fire, Halton EMS, and Halton Police.
  - **Accessibility:** Commitment to ensuring the festival is inclusive for all.
  - **Vendors & Partnerships:** Food, artisan, and retail vendors showcase local businesses.
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## 9. Financial Plan

### Revenue Sources:

- Sponsorships & partnerships
- Government & cultural grants
- Vendor fees
- Merchandise & beverage sales
- Donations

### Expenses:

- Artist fees
- Production & staging
- Security & logistics
- Marketing & media
- Insurance & permits



#### **Sustainability Plan:**

- Build multi-year sponsorship agreements.
  - Grow earned revenue (merch, VIP experiences, ticketed add-ons).
  - Diversify funding streams to stabilize financial position.
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## **10. Risk Management**

- **Weather:** Contingency planning for inclement conditions.
  - **Financial:** Diversifying funding, building reserves.
  - **Health & Safety:** Emergency plans, insurance, volunteer training.
  - **Operational:** Strong partnerships with city services, local businesses, Chamber of Commerce and Ec. Dev and Tourism, World Cup of Soccer collaboration?
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## **11. Sustainability & Future Vision**

The Burlington Sound of Music Festival is committed to long-term growth, innovation, and sustainability. Over the next five years, we aim to:

- Strengthen partnerships with funders and sponsors.
  - Expand green initiatives to become a model eco-friendly festival.
  - Showcase more diverse local talent and create opportunities for youth.
  - Increase economic impact and cultural prestige for Burlington.
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## **12. Appendices**

- Attendance and economic impact statistics (2022)
- Sample sponsorship packages 2025



## SOM Budget Historically

2026 estimated : \$1,230,000.00

2025 Actual: \$1,343,020.00

2024 Actual: \$1,772,343.00

2023 Actual: \$1,851,973.00