



September 11, 2025

Mayor Marianne Meed Ward &  
Members of Burlington City Council  
City of Burlington  
Office of the City Clerk  
426 Brant St.  
PO Box 5013  
Burlington, ON L7R 3Z6

**RE: Sound of Music Festival**

Dear Mayor Meed Ward and Members of Council,

On behalf of the Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA), the voice of Canada's vibrant live music industry, I am writing to signal our strong support for Burlington's *Sound of Music Festival*, one of the city's greatest cultural and economic assets. For 45 years, the festival has showcased Burlington on a national stage, welcoming visitors, creating memories, and generating lasting benefits for the local economy. In 2022 alone, it delivered an estimated **\$15 million in economic impact**, directly supporting hotels, restaurants, retailers, artists, and small businesses. Visitors travelled here specifically for the festival, reinforcing Burlington as a destination for music, culture, and community.

This success is part of a larger story. Across Canada and around the world, municipalities are recognizing the extraordinary value of live music to economic growth, tourism, and civic pride. The CLMA's recent economic impact study of the sector, [Hear and Now](#), confirms this impact at the national level: live music generates over **\$10 billion in GDP**, sustains more than **101,000 jobs**, and returns **\$3.73 billion annually in government tax revenues**. Other cities are acting on this evidence by investing purposefully in their live music ecosystems to attract visitors, retain talent, and strengthen community identity. Burlington, with the *Sound of Music Festival* as its summer anchor, has every reason to continue to build on its own strong foundation and leverage this example.

Achieving this will require a range of innovative and tactical partnerships. We encourage the City to continue working closely with festival leadership to secure the festival's stability and support its renewal and growth. Increased municipal support would send a clear signal of confidence to sponsors, partners, and visitors, reinforcing long-term sustainability. Additionally, exploring tourism development strategies that highlight the festival as a flagship attraction, while drawing on best practices from other jurisdictions that have successfully leveraged music events to strengthen downtowns and business districts, can further enhance its impact.

The CLMA is eager to collaborate, offering national data, lessons from across Canada, and practical ideas for sustainable growth. With the right range of supports, the *Sound of Music Festival* can not only remain a signature event but also become an even stronger driver of Burlington's cultural identity and economic future. This can be a conversation, not about loss, but about scale — what more the festival can achieve as a driver of Burlington's identity and prosperity.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continuing commitment to Burlington's growth as a creative city. We look forward to supporting your efforts to ensure the *Sound of Music Festival* remains a cornerstone of the city's cultural and economic strength for decades to come.

Sincerely,



Ms. Erin [REDACTED]  
President & CEO  
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## **Rock and Roll Can Never Die**

By Awnish [REDACTED] and Helen [REDACTED]

We own restaurants. We love live music. Burlington doesn't just deserve both, it needs both. That's why the Sound of Music Festival matters. It's an unforgettable weekend every year when our city feels alive in every sense of the word. Without it? Silence. With it? Nights you never forget.

When 400,000 people hit our waterfront, you can feel it in your bones. The park shakes. The streets buzz. Patios are jammed, hotels are full, and downtown is bursting at the seams. Staff are hustling with smiles and sore feet. It's a huge economic shot in the arm for downtown businesses.

Take that away? We don't just lose a festival. We lose an annual celebration. We lose a spark. We lose a piece of Burlington.

And small businesses lose, in a time where many cannot afford to lose any more. We operate 2 of our restaurants in the downtown core, The Dickens Pub and Prime Steak + Raw Bar. Sound of Music weekend is one of the busiest weekends of the year for many downtown businesses. The economic impact of losing this festival would hit hard.

At The Dickens Pub, music is in our DNA. We host a weekly open mic night, live music on weekends, and have been a proud partner of Sound of Music and Battle of the Bands for years. This matters to us deeply.

So, it is time to act. If this festival goes down, Burlington goes quiet. And quiet is boring. It's time to step up or step aside – community, government, business – and make sure we keep our biggest stage, our loudest weekend, and our proudest tradition alive.

In the words of the legendary Neil Young, "Hey hey, my my, Rock and Roll can never die"

Awnish and Helen

Owners, B Social Hospitality

The Dickens Pub, Prime Steak + Raw Bar

## **SOMstories –**

### **Our volunteers speak about what the events means to them and the community:**

More than 6000 volunteer hours are logged each year. The impact of the social, human and community aspects of SOM cannot be understated. Here's a series of stories from some of the volunteer roster.

#### **Matt [REDACTED] -**

Simply put: I am Lover of All Music and Supporter of Community Culture. Sound of Music epitomizes both of these values.

In early 2000s, I joined the programming/stage management team after years of being an attendee of Sound of Music (SOM). Every year was a long process of meeting to select artists for SOM and then work early morning to late evening for the 4 days or when it was 9 days some years with Live on The Lake concerts. Being on Father's Day weekend is exceptionally special as I was not a father when I started to volunteer and became a father of two now late aged teenagers. Volunteering at SOM while my kids aged, they visited yearly then joined in helping many years. Sometimes you need those small hands and bodies on festival side to get into small areas or lifted into tour bus windows to unlock the bus from the inside. Having a family who loves SOM has led to so many great family memories to celebrate my Father's Day weekend for almost 25 years.

Volunteering at SOM has also extended my family network of making lifelong friends I have met every year at the festival since I have been involved with the festival longer than I have not in my lifespan. Five years ago, our family moved to Fredericton, New Brunswick for work relocation and due to love of SOM festival I take vacation from work and return for the week to work the festival with my whole heart invested in making every year better than the year before with any volunteer tasks are needed. The SOM volunteering work is a source of extreme pride and my plan is to do it until I pass which is many, many years in the future.

**Richard [REDACTED]** -

I have been a volunteer with the Burlington Sound of Music Festival for 25 years. I started as someone who just wanted to give back and quickly evolved to taking on a leadership role. From my first experience as a bartender, to programming, to stage management then a board member. This has been a meaningful experience for me but more importantly the relationships built in being able to support the city of live in and love. This group is so committed that they give up personal vacation and for me I have not been home for a father's day in 25 years. The group of volunteers that I volunteer with have become family. There is no better feeling that seeing the smile on the faces of our customers who attend this free event. Watching families enjoy a wide range of entertainment in a beautiful venue is second to none. The fact that I am apart of this event which brings in over 300,000 people yearly is truly amazing. I can honestly say that I would be lost along with my peers if this event went away. It is a part of the city and something that defines Burlington. It would be a massive loss if it did not continue. MY hope is that it continues to be a major part of Burlington and provides free music to generations to come.

**Mike [REDACTED]** -

What the Sound of Music Festival means to me; it means community. It means meeting up with friends and listening to music, It means being part of Canada's largest free outdoor Festival. Wow! I can't imagine the City with-out the SOM, it helps bring the local community together, while inviting new visitors to our great City. There would be a big hole in the beginning of each Summer if this Festival stops happening. I attended the festival every year for 40 years, so in 2019 I decided to finally give back and help by being part of the festival. It's fun to see the park transform from a blank canvas to a space teeming with energy. I get to use my skills assisting the Logistics Team and laying out the park and doing the drawings. I get to interact with other volunteers and guests. Each year, after it's over, I get a great sense of pride and accomplishment knowing that we pulled off another great festival.

**Scott [REDACTED] -**

I had never volunteered much until my eldest decided to join the BTTB on his 13th birthday, and I decided to join the BTTB Boosters, the parental fund raising group for the BTTB. I volunteered for almost every fund raiser they had, truly enjoying the camaraderie of the fellow Boosters, knowing that our combined efforts helped to reduce the costs to the band members for their numerous tours. Volunteering offered me new experiences from my occupation. Participating in its' parades and some Tours as a chaperone, being a member of its executive in various positions including President allowed me to provide input and direction to a very respected organization. Almost 7 years later, my son had left the Band for university, I felt it was time to leave. The then Parade Chair for SoM approached me and asked me to help with the Parade. I was a parade judge for two years, and then was asked to become the Parade Chair. Volunteering is a way to give back to the Community by both my time and labour. It gives me a sense of satisfaction when an event I organise or assist with is recognized as being meaningful to the participants and to the community. Now being retired, volunteering with the Festival also provides me with another interest and use of my time. The volunteer 'vibe' of the SoMF vs the BTTB Boosters, has a similar sense of camaraderie. Even if we only see one another for a few weeks or even days, and what we volunteer to do is completely unrelated, that vibe alone makes it special, if not unique. I have volunteered for 7 years with the BTTB and 16 years with SOM, a total of 23 years.

If the SoMF no longer existed, it would firstly be a significant financial blow to Burlington's hospitality industry, restaurants, hotels, downtown retail shops. It would reflect poorly on Burlington's reputation for its home-town talent such as Sarah Harmer, Walk off the Earth, Finger Eleven, even going back to Gordy Tapp. For some now famous bands had their first 'real' concert experience on our stages.

**Megan [REDACTED]** -

I began my journey with the Burlington Sound of Music Festival as an intern in the summer of 2022, and by that fall, I knew I wanted to stay involved as a volunteer. What began as a short-term role quickly became a long-term passion. I started as Volunteer Centre Chair, managing schedules and logistics for a database of 950 volunteers. Today, that database has grown to more than 1,500 individuals who collectively contribute over 6,000 hours during the festival weekend. The scope of this work taught me the importance of organization, communication, and teamwork—and how meaningful it is to create positive volunteer experiences that directly fuel the festival's success.

I now serve as the Operations Assistant (volunteer), working closely with the Vice President of Operations. In this role, I support many aspects of the festival, contributing more than 500 hours between November 2024 and June 2025. This position has given me a deeper perspective on the moving parts that come together to create such a vibrant, community-driven event. The skills I first developed during my internship with SOM continue to influence my professional journey, shaping my roles as Festival Assistant with Spartan Race Canada, Operations and Events Manager with the World Axe Throwing League, and now Volunteer Coordinator with Breast Cancer Canada. I credit much of my career growth and confidence in event operations to the foundation built here at SOM.

My connection to the festival, however, goes far beyond professional development—it is deeply personal. I grew up attending the Sound of Music Festival, starting as a child watching the parade with my family, much like the festival itself began. As a teenager, I came with friends and was amazed that we could see inspiring, current bands for free—performances that felt like once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. Now, as an adult, I volunteer to ensure that today's youth and families can share the same experiences that shaped me. The festival has become a generational tradition in my own family, with my mom having volunteered in past years and my niece beginning her volunteer journey this year.

The volunteer team itself has become an extended chosen family to me. We laugh together, we cry together, and sometimes we even bleed together—all in service of bringing this festival to life. That bond, built on shared passion and commitment, is one of the greatest gifts the Sound of Music has given me.

The loss of this festival would be nothing short of a tidal wave for Burlington and the surrounding community. If the Sound of Music Festival were to disappear, the music, culture, and spirit of togetherness it inspires would no longer touch future generations. For me personally, its absence would feel like losing a close friend or family member—something foundational and irreplaceable suddenly gone. Music is not for the privileged; it

is for everyone, to be celebrated across cultures and communities without barriers. The Sound of Music Festival has given me lifelong memories, a foundation for my career, and a community I am proud to call family. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to give back and ensure its impact continues for generations to come.

**Micaela [REDACTED]** –

I stumbled into the Sound of Music Festival by chance. Four years ago, a friend pushed me to apply for a job, and I ended up as one of six Festival Associates. I didn't grow up in Burlington, and I had no connection to the area or the festival. What I found, though, was one of the most demanding, exhausting, and life-changing experiences of my life. For two straight weeks, we did everything from putting up fences to hauling cases of beer, bartending, and picking up trash. I was given the responsibility of coordinating all of "StreetFest". We were working from early morning until after midnight. I remember being bruised, bone-tired, and honestly thinking, "Who in their right mind would volunteer for this?" Then, after the big Saturday show, everything shifted. It was early Sunday morning, just before the park opened. Eco-Dave and his team had been out all night cleaning up, but the park was still a mess, so the Festival Associates were sent to help. I was dragging myself through beer cans and trash, while the other Associates were stretched thin, racing against the clock. Then I saw it, Brent, the Director of Operations, singing as he worked. Around him, Rose and Ronny with the logistics team, Kevin from the volunteer team, and dozens of others were shoulder to shoulder, pushing through the exhaustion, and giving everything they had to finish the job. In that moment, I realised the Sound of Music Festival wasn't just an event; it was a family. Their energy, commitment, and joy showed me that this community was bigger than any one person, and I knew I had to be a part of it forever. Since then, I've returned every year: not just for the four festival days, but for the full week of set-up and tear-down. Along the way, I've made lifelong friends, the kind of people I'd do anything for, and I know they'd do the same for me. It's more than volunteering - it's belonging. I've seen firsthand the incredible passion this festival sparks. The work is hard, there are never enough hands, and the days are long, but there's something magical about the way this community comes together. If the Sound of Music Festival didn't exist, Burlington wouldn't just lose a weekend of music. It would lose the heartbeat of thousands of people who come together to lift each other up, to create memories, and to show what's possible when passion leads the way. That's why I keep coming back. The work is tough, the days are long, but the impact, the music, the friendships, and the community stay with you forever.