

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 11, 2025

The Future of Canada's Largest Free Outdoor Music Festival Is at Risk

BURLINGTON, ON – After 45 years of music, memories, and community-building, the **Burlington's Sound of Music Festival** is facing a crisis. As Canada's largest free outdoor music festival, we have brought together more than **400,000 visitors annually**, offered a stage to **50+ Canadian artists** each year and contributed an estimated **\$25 million in economic impact** to Burlington and the surrounding area. Now, with sharp **declines in public arts funding and sponsorship**, our future is now uncertain.

What was once a thriving example of free and accessible live music is now grappling with the hard truth: **We can no longer sustain this festival without urgent financial support!**

Funding Cuts Are Undermining a Legacy

The federal **Heritage Fund**, which traditionally supported with \$200,000 annually, now only offers grants up to \$50,000. Other funding programs have been similarly reduced in material amounts. These losses, compounded by shrinking sponsorship dollars, have created a critical gap that threatens the very heart of the festival.

"We've done everything possible to run lean without sacrificing safety or the quality of the experience," says the Festival's Board of Directors Chair, Dave Shepherd. "We've trimmed costs - over \$500k has been removed in the last 2 years, streamlined operations, and maximized efficiencies. But we are now at the edge—without new partners stepping in, we don't know if we can keep going." Shepherd goes on to add that "the festival is run and managed professionally, but the real magic happens with our dedicated volunteers who clock an impressive 6000 hours, over the festival weekend. We provide a great opportunity for summer youth employment each year as well, for some of the students in our community. "

A Proven Economic Engine and Cultural Beacon

A recent survey conducted with **Burlington Economic Development and Tourism** underscores what we've long known:

- **42% of attendees come from outside the city**, with many staying **4+ nights**, boosting revenue for hotels, restaurants, and retailers.
- **90% of out-of-town visitors plan to return** to Burlington after attending
- **Over 40 local businesses were showcased as community partners**
- **The festival provided contracts in over 500k in value to Southern Ontario based businesses**

This is more than a festival. It's an **economic and cultural anchor** that helps define Burlington's identity, attracts tourism, and promotes small business success across the city and region.

A Call to Action for Community Champions - The time to act is now!

We're calling on **community leaders, philanthropists, corporate partners**, and **anyone who believes in the power of music and arts** to help. We urgently need a **major sponsor or group of sponsors** to join us in protecting this treasured event and ensuring that **future generations** can continue to experience the joy, connection, and inclusivity that live music offers.

Why It Matters

In a time where connection and community are more important than ever, free and open access cultural experiences matter. The Sound of Music Festival is a **safe space**, a **mental health booster**, and a platform that **breaks down barriers**. It is one of the last of its kind—a rare event that remains **completely free to attend**, offering **world-class performances** to everyone, regardless of income or background. **There is no barrier to entry!**

This is more than a funding shortfall—it's a **community crossroads**. Without immediate support, we risk losing a 45-year tradition that unites thousands in celebration every summer.

Let's Keep the Music Playing

If you are a business leader, a brand that values impact, or a citizen who wants to make a difference, we urge you to reach out. Sponsorship opportunities, legacy partnerships, and creative collaborations are all on the table. **Its time for change! Together, we can and must keep the music alive!**

For more information or to schedule a conversation about sponsorship opportunities, please contact:

Brent Kinnaird - VP Festival Operations

Dave Shepherd - Chairperson, Board of Directors Julie

Cole - Vice Chairperson, Board of Directors

dave@soundofmusic.ca
bkinnaird@soundofmusic.ca
www.soundofmusic.ca