

Toronto Economic Development Committee
March 5, 2013
Amy Terrill, Music Canada

Mr. Chair, Councillors – thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the arts funding motion before you.

Music Canada leads a coalition of music industry members representing live venues, festival organizers, major and independent music companies, recording studios, managers and artists – together we have coalesced around the idea of accelerating the music cluster in Toronto.

We represent the commercial music industry – which employs thousands of people and contribute about half a billion dollars to the city's economy.

Some of you will remember that we spoke to the motion brought forward by Councillor Layton last year to develop a plan to grow the music industry – presenting highlights of a report we had produced that lays out a blueprint for exactly that.

Based on a comparative study of Austin Texas and Toronto – and also reviewing the great work that has been done here in film and television – the report's recommendations include those I have put before you today which are:

1. To establish a music office;
2. To establish a music industry board;
3. To ask staff to develop a business plan for a multidimensional representation of Toronto's music legacy.

Much has happened in the last year.

On the top of the list is the great work that has been done by the Creative Capital Advisory Committee and City Council which is why we are here today.

The arts allocation recommendation before you represents an important investment in a critical segment of the economy. A small but vital component of that is the support for Toronto's music industry – listed as part of the allotment for cultural services programming.

By advancing this program – I want to assure you that you are not acting alone.

Private and public players are invested in these outcomes.

Over the last year we have met with the Mayor's office, numerous councillors and staff

Councillor Thompson, for instance, toured an innovative facility in his ward which began as a music management company but now is a successful education facility and music business incubator.

The coalition of industry members I mentioned has continued to grow – later today a small group is meeting with Councillor Josh Colle in an informal live music task force. On the agenda today - two key issues confronting live music venues: the postering ordinance and business licenses.

The Ontario government has responded to our efforts – announcing a live music strategy in late January to make Ontario one of THE global destinations for live music tourism – anchored by Toronto.

The province is also supporting our efforts to develop a brand for Toronto's music scene – a brand that Tourism Toronto is aware of and waiting for so that they can help broadcast it.

Very soon the province will also hire a music officer who will be tasked with coordinating its many efforts in this space.

Just last week we also heard that Toronto's sister city of Chicago has set up a 2 person music office acknowledging they have a “music city in hiding”. Their office will focus on the two broad areas we recommend Toronto's office address: policy and programs to grow the industry and assistance navigating city processes. What the article I've given you doesn't tell you is that in formatting their music office Chicago contacted Austin with our report in hand – as a blueprint.

Since we spoke last year Austin has shown great interest in working with Toronto to build new trade and tourism pathways through a music city alliance. Austin's mayor Lee Leffingwell sent a letter to Mayor Ford last week and has arranged a private meeting for Councillors Crawford and Colle who are travelling to Austin.

We have a triumvirate of music cities building here – with the commitment to enhance the cultural exchange with Chicago – and Austin's eagerness to share their knowledge and experience – we are well positioned – with just a small investment in infrastructure – to power up these partnerships.

[pause]

Specifically we have called for the creation of a music office.

Contained in our submission is a detailed look at what that office could accomplish in its first year with measurable results.

Unlike the film office - the music office is not intended to focus on issuing permits. But it would be a single point of contact for live music operators so that they can navigate city hall.

More importantly though the music officer would lead public private efforts to generate new economic activity in the city - would ensure music city alliances like those with Chicago and

austin deliver results - and would identify ways that music can be leveraged for things like tourism, investment attraction and business retention.

Numerous studies note the city building power of music.

Austin's 2012 economic impact study points out that creativity and culture attract and retain talented people - in turn affecting business attraction, retention and entrepreneurialism.

With a music office in place Toronto would be in a position to capitalize on this power.

The second recommendation is for a music industry board. This would build on the informal live music task for that has been meeting since earlier this year.

The real value in this body is to facilitate dialogue between this important sector of the economy and city hall.

[pause]

Not long ago this committee and in turn, City Council, adopted a new strategic plan to accelerate economic growth and job creation.

Music can help.

We employ thousands of well paid, predominantly young workers in a cutting edge digital environment.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has named music as one of Ontario's 3 key competitive advantages along with traditional powerhouses manufacturing and mining.

A comprehensive plan engaging private and public sector partners will lead to greater economic activity, more jobs and investment.

The province is committed. The commercial music industry is committed. We look forward to the participation of the City of Toronto.

And finally - our submission recommends that council ask staff to develop a business plan for a recognition program chronicling the deep music history in this city. From reggae to rock 'n roll, yonge street to yorkville - toronto is steeped in music history and yet existing historical plaques make little mention of it.

A multidimensional program - combining physical plaques and a Mobile enabled application would enhance both visitor and resident experience.

Private and public sources of funding are available to facilitate this program but leadership should start at city hall. A business plan developed by staff - or by the city's new music office - would provide a proposal from which further action could follow.

[pause]

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