



**The voice of live
music in Canada**
La voix du spectacle
musical au Canada

November 9, 2023

Toronto and East York Community Council
c/o Mr. John D. Elvidge, City Clerk
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

RE: Planning Application Number 21 235163 STE 13 OZ - Request to Amend the Zoning By-law - 410 Sherbourne Street

Dear Toronto and East York Community Council,

My name is Erin Benjamin, and I am writing to you today in my capacity as President & CEO of the Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA) out of grave concern for the future of 410 Sherbourne Street and specifically, the Phoenix Concert Theatre (the "Phoenix").

The voice of Canada's vibrant live music industry, the CLMA works to entrench live music's economic, cultural, and social value and to create the conditions for concerts to thrive. With hundreds of members from across the country, the CLMA represents the stages upon which our artists stand, both indoors and out, and the supply chain that surrounds them. We are behind the people behind live music from small venues to Canada's large-scale concerts, arenas and festivals, to promoters and performing arts centres, talent agents, production crew, freelance service providers, suppliers and many others including both for and non-profit companies and organizations who make up Canada's live performance touring infrastructure.

Every business sector and cultural scene has its own unique ecology - a mix of creators, enterprises and service providers of differing sizes or stages of evolution, tightly linked in a thriving local economy. The music industry is no exception: a complex web of occupations and organizations has gradually evolved around the fundamental act of a musician performing live onstage for an audience. At the centre of this intricate web is the **live music venue**.

Live music venues of all sizes are the heart of any local live music ecology. The excitement and energy of a live show, whether given by an emerging artist or a global star, is just one reason people visit, live, work, and play in neighbourhoods where music thrives. Beyond this direct impact, live music indirectly helps sustain a wide range of other businesses and sectors, its effects quantified in research drawn from around the world. Music venues are critical to contemporary city-building as a vital component of any healthy community, contributing in myriad ways to the quality of life we enjoy – no matter where we live.

For musicians who develop their craft, build audiences, and generate income through live performance, the "venue ladder" offers opportunities at every stage of a career. Emerging artists begin in the smallest local venues; if they're talented, popular and persistent, eventually they may progress to playing larger stages and eventually to concert halls or stadiums. This venue ladder is essential for the development of our artists - without it, their careers would struggle to gain momentum or cease to exist outright. So all venues, of all sizes, must be carefully and thoughtfully nurtured, to ensure cities can leverage the true artistic, economic, cultural and social promise they offer.

Today, the very survival of Toronto's independent live music ecosystem is at stake. These venues have been threatened by exponentially rising rents, taxes, and insurance rates; development pressures; and a shifting entertainment landscape, not to mention the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. There's never been a better time to highlight the economic and

cultural contributions of Toronto's live independent music venues, or to turn our collective attention to how we might help them survive.

Venues do not just support musicians. A whole community is built around live performance, and the Phoenix is one of the most important examples of how the impact of live music venues extends beyond the artists and resulting employment opportunities. The Phoenix creates space to bring an incredible range of diverse communities from across Toronto together, and in doing so provides people with a sense of identity and belonging in their city. This is particularly true for marginalized, racialized and other communities that may not have other places to gather. The Phoenix is internationally recognized for its commitment to building authentic relationships with a range of communities, as it is equally known for its support of developing emerging talent, and its diversity in programming.

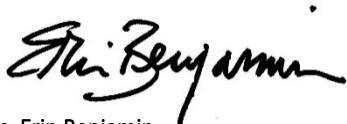
For over 30 years, the Phoenix has hosted thousands of concerts, not only from the likes of The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Foo Fighters, David Bowie, and Green Day but from Canada's biggest and brightest stars from Celine Dion, Tragically Hip, and Arcade Fire, to The Glorious Sons, Arkells and Sam Roberts. Its standing as a culturally iconic landmark cannot be understated.

In addition to adding to Toronto's economic, cultural and social landscape, at almost 1400 cap (capacity) the Phoenix is a rare and essential sized space in Toronto's venue ladder. A good neighbour, a strong member of the local community and a highly-regarded best-in-class business – the Phoenix doesn't just belong to Toronto... but all of Canada. It is our hope that any redevelopment of 410 Sherbourne Street will safeguard this legacy and ensure the Phoenix remains a fixture for future generations of artists, fans and community.

In closing, I would appreciate the committee's thorough consideration of how live music changes our lives in countless, quantifiable ways. In addition to being incubators for up-and-coming stars, the clear link between quality of life, mental health and access to live music has been made, globally, in study after study. As we build more housing for Canadians, it is essential that we design our neighbourhoods of the future to meet the needs – and the physical and mental health priorities – of all Canadians.

We don't just live in our homes, we live in our neighbourhoods - where seek out experiences that help to define who we are. If we lose the Phoenix we don't just lose access to concerts, we lose the opportunity to share experiences together – something we need more than ever, especially in diverse, growing cities like Toronto.

Sincerely,



Ms. Erin Benjamin

President & CEO

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