



## Season's Greetings from the Hamilton Musicians' Guild

### Inside this Issue:

- \* Incoming HMG Executive
- \* Tom Wilson
- \* JUNOs 2026
- \* CRA—CERB Repayment

# Hamilton Musicians' Guild

## December 2025 President's Report



**Larry Feudo**  
President

As we near the end of 2025, we should pause to reflect on the past year.

While there is an ebb and flow to issues affecting musicians - among them the cross border issues and many venues closing - we remain steadfast in advocating for our members.

Whether it is helping members with their P2 visas and replacement letters at the 11th hour, or getting the many Pedler and Petrillo grants for our sick and injured musicians, we work for the advancement of our member's lot.

For example, in the first 6 months of the MPTF Calendar year (May to April), we've done more MPTF jobs for our members than the entire previous year distributing grants on an equitable basis.

Among the many events sponsored through the Fund, we've worked with the Concession BIA Streetfest and Sidewalk Sounds, It's Your Festival, Dundas Cactus Fest, Waterfront Trust and the many Seniors' Homes in our jurisdiction.

The Hamilton Public Library has been an invaluable ally in presenting many of our members in concert. Among their many programs we've sponsored are Ontario Culture Days, Black History Month, and International Women's Month. Jazz in April is always a resounding success, exposing our jazz musicians to a whole new audience.

We're especially proud of our Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra educational series that brings the orchestra to the schools. This reaches kids who might not have any experience listening to the classical repertoire.

This is just a few of our partnerships within our community- we're working on several additional projects to expand our reach through more initiatives that will bring more work for our members.

In closing, I'd like to wish you all Season's Greetings and a Happy New Year.



Yours in solidarity,

*Larry Feudo*



# From the International Musician



## Money and Politics

by Allistair Elliott, AFM Vice President from Canada

In Canada, the arts and culture sector contributed more than \$65 billion to direct gross domestic product (GDP) last year. The total economic impact of the sector is over \$100 billion in GDP. The reality is that arts and culture in Canada supports more jobs per dollar than other key sectors such as oil and gas, manufacturing, or agriculture, and generates \$29 in economic activity for every dollar in federal investment.

Announcements in the federal budget last month extended funding for the next three years to Canada Music Fund. While our Creative Industries Coalition lobby efforts for a Live Performance Tax Credit were considered, the budget fell short of including such an announcement.

Collecting statistics such as above, which were shared from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce report published Oct 28,

2025, as well as the data we collected from the town hall meetings last month, are critical to advocacy efforts to build political power for our union.

After our recent submission to Global Affairs Canada on the Canada United States and Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), I recently had the opportunity to meet with Member of Parliament for Fredericton, New Brunswick, David Myles to discuss current advocacy strategy on P-2 visa issues. I am thankful to Member of Parliament Myles, who is a former AFM member and Juno Award winner, for taking a personal interest. I look forward to working with him on this file.

On November 12, I met with staff in Minister Dominic LeBlanc's office. Minister LeBlanc serves as president of the King's Privy Council and is the minister responsible for Canada-US Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Internal

Trade. His office is front and centre in negotiations with the US administration.

Canadian Conference Secretary and Local 180 (Ottawa, ON) Secretary-Treasurer Robin Moir and I had a productive meeting with the Director of Policy and a Senior Policy Advisor from Minister LeBlanc's office. We had open and constructive conversations around specific issues and strategy for Canadian musicians travelling to the US for work. Further meetings with senior policy staff at Global Affairs Canada and a meeting with Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) staff completed a couple of productive and informative days on continuing advocacy efforts in Ottawa.

Thank you to the attendees at our town hall meetings over the last few weeks. The information and data continue to be collected. The discussions from these

recent meetings in Ottawa showed high interest in our CUSMA submission and are an indication of further, more in-depth discussions to come.

The work in Washington, DC, by AFM Director of Government Affairs Ben Kessler and International President Tino Gagliardi with the Labor Advisory Committee have been completely synchronized with our submission to Global Affairs Canada on the CUSMA submission. I anticipate further discussions with senior policy staff in Minister LeBlanc's office in the coming months.

Our AFM mission statement at work means members continue to engage through our locals to have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect us, and we will continue building political power to ensure that musicians' voices are heard at every level of government.

## L'argent et la politique

par Allistair Elliott, vice-président de l'AFM pour le Canada

Au Canada, le secteur des arts et de la culture a contribué à hauteur de plus de 65 milliards de dollars au produit intérieur brut (PIB) direct l'année dernière. L'impact économique total du secteur dépasse les 100 milliards de dollars de PIB. De fait, les arts et la culture au Canada soutiennent plus d'emplois par dollar que d'autres secteurs clés tels que le pétrole et le gaz, l'industrie manufacturière ou l'agriculture, et ils génèrent 29 dollars d'activité économique pour chaque dollar investi par le gouvernement fédéral.

Parmi les annonces liées au budget fédéral le mois dernier figure le prolongement pour trois ans du financement pour le Fonds de la musique du Canada. Toutefois, bien que nos démarches avec la Coalition des industries créatives en faveur d'un crédit d'impôt pour les spectacles aient été prises en considération, le budget n'a pas inclus d'annonce à cet égard.

La collecte de statistiques telles que celles énumérées ci-haut, qui sont tirées du rapport de la Chambre de commerce du Canada publié le 28 octobre 2025, ainsi

que des données que nous avons recueillies lors des assemblées publiques du mois dernier, est essentielle pour nos actions de lobbying en vue de renforcer le pouvoir politique de notre syndicat.

Après notre récente soumission à Affaires mondiales Canada concernant l'Accord Canada-États-Unis-Mexique (ACEUM), j'ai récemment eu l'occasion de rencontrer le député de Fredericton (Nouveau-Brunswick), David Myles, pour discuter de la stratégie actuelle de défense de nos intérêts en matière de permis P-2. Je suis reconnaissant au député Myles, ancien membre de l'AFM et lauréat d'un prix Juno, de s'être personnellement intéressé à cette question, et je me réjouis de travailler avec lui sur ce dossier.

Le 12 novembre, j'ai rencontré le personnel du cabinet du ministre Dominic LeBlanc. Le ministre LeBlanc est président du Conseil privé du Roi et ministre responsable du Commerce Canada-États-Unis, des Affaires intergouvernementales et du Commerce intérieur. Son cabinet est au premier plan

des négociations avec l'administration américaine.

Robin Moir, secrétaire de la Conférence canadienne de l'AFM et secrétaire trésorier de la section locale 180 (Ottawa, Ontario), et moi-même avons eu une réunion productive avec le directeur des politiques et un conseiller principal en politiques du cabinet du ministre LeBlanc. Nos conversations ont été ouvertes et constructives et porté sur des questions spécifiques, notamment la stratégie à adopter pour les musiciens canadiens qui se rendent aux États-Unis en vue de travailler. D'autres réunions avec des hauts responsables politiques d'Affaires mondiales Canada et une réunion avec le personnel de l'Administration canadienne de la sûreté du transport aérien (ACSTA) ont complété ces deux journées productives et instructives à Ottawa consacrées à la poursuite de nos efforts de lobbying.

Merci à tous ceux qui ont participé à nos assemblées publiques au cours des dernières semaines. La collecte d'in-

formations et de données se poursuit. Les échanges qui ont eu lieu lors de ces récentes réunions à Ottawa ont démontré un vif intérêt pour notre soumission relative à l'ACEUM et laissent présager des discussions plus approfondies à venir.

Le travail effectué à Washington D.C. par le directeur des Affaires gouvernementales de l'AFM, Ben Kessler, et le président international, Tino Gagliardi, avec le Comité consultatif du travail a été parfaitement synchronisé avec notre soumission à Affaires mondiales Canada sur l'ACEUM. Je prévois qu'il y aura d'autres discussions avec les hauts responsables politiques du cabinet du ministre LeBlanc dans les mois à venir.

Notre mission, telle que définie dans l'énoncé de mission de l'AFM, signifie que nos membres continuent de s'engager par l'intermédiaire de nos sections locales afin d'avoir une voix significative dans les décisions qui les concernent. Et nous continuerons à renforcer notre pouvoir politique afin de garantir que la voix des musiciens soit entendue à tous les paliers de gouvernement.

# Hamilton Musicians' Guild Outgoing Executive Board 2024-2025



**Reg Denis**  
1st Vice Pres



**Larry Feudo**  
President



**Paul Panchezak**  
2nd Vice Pres



**John Morris**  
Sergeant-At-Arms



**Ryan McKenna**  
Director



**Ron Palangio**  
Marshall



**Lorelee McGuirl**  
Director



**Haley Marie Donald**  
Director



**Bruce Tournay**  
Director



**Michael Bittle**  
Office Admin



# Hamilton Musicians' Guild Incoming Executive Board 2026-2027



**Reg Denis**  
1st Vice Pres



**Larry Feudo**  
President



**Paul Panchezak**  
2nd Vice Pres



**John Morris**  
Sergeant-At-Arms



**Ryan McKenna**  
Director



**Ron Palangio**  
Marshall



**Loralee McGuirl**  
Director



**John Staley**  
Director



**Ginger Graham**  
Director



**Michael Bittle**  
Office Admin



## Office Admin Report



Season’s Greeting. It seems like only days ago we were wishing each other “Happy New Year” and very soon we will be doing it again. It really seems, quite literally, that the year has flown by.

It wasn’t just the office move. It wasn’t just all the P2 application we assisted. It wasn’t just all the MPTF applications we processed. It wasn’t just the nomination process for a new Executive. It wasn’t just making sure all the monthly and quarterly reports were filed on time to keep the AFM happy.

Speaking of MPTF opportunities, we are looking at streamlining the MPTF application process to reduce the office workload —more on this later.

All in all, 2025 has been a very busy year, and 2026 looks like it will likely be more of the same.

**Looking over the past year**, membership continued to be strong in spite of all the activity down south of us. We had a goodly number of new members join the HMG. P2 applications are taking longer and costing more, but many of our members have responded by booking gig dates further out and renewing their membership for longer dates.

Our nomination meeting in October saw two Board members leave us—Bruce Tournay and Halie Marie MacDonald—due to personal and professional issues, and two new members join the Board—John Staley who is a Past-President of the HMG, and Ginger Graham who has enjoyed an exceptionally varied musical career and is looking forward to making a contribution to the Local.

**As we move into 2026**, while the global situation looks somewhat uncertain, the Local’s finances remain strong, membership numbers remain strong, and a vast number of gig opportunities exist for those willing to dig in to get them..

### COMPARATIVE MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

	<u>Nov. 30, 2025</u>	<u>Nov. 23, 2023</u>
<b>Current Members</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>548</b>
<b>New Members (Year to Date)</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Reinstated Members (Year to Date)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Suspended Members (Current Quarter)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Expelled Members (Year to Date)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Resigned in Good Standing (Year to Date)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Deceased Members (Year to Date)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>



# Sunday Singa- long

**Sunday**

**December 28**

**3:00 pm**

**90 minutes**

**The Move Room,  
164 Ottawa St N,  
Hamilton**

**Everyone can sing! No singing experience necessary.**

**Come with your voice ready to build vibrations through song. Expect to learn a little bit about the voice, practice harmony, laugh, play and be in the moment.**

**Gathering our voices in song can get us through hard times, be a powerful act of revolution, and create space for pleasure. This non-results-based gathering is intended to bring joy into our bodies while we sing together!**

**For more information or to book your spot:**

**[Piper Sings - Events](https://www.pipersings.com/events/)**

**<https://www.pipersings.com/events/>**



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WEALTH ADVISOR  
**MARIE PHILLIPS**

B.A. (Hons), RRC, CFDS, PFP, FCSI, MFA-P  
marie.phillips@ipcsecurities.com  
905-648-2425

As an amateur musician, Marie has channeled her passion for the arts into philanthropic endeavours that enrich her community.

*One is the loneliest number ...*



*When 2 or more new members join the HMG at the same time,  
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*Only the lonely pay more.*

*Get a friend, neighbour or your band members  
to join the Hamilton Musicians' Guild with you  
and save \$\$ big time!*

*Phone: 905-525-4040*

*Email: local293hmg@bellnet.ca*

*www.HamiltonMusicians.org*



# Membership Matters

Membership Activity September 15, 2025 to November 30, 2025



## WELCOME: NEW MEMBERS

Polina Burdukova-Kemp  
Eon Copeland  
Eve Copeland  
Jesse Dietschi  
Katherine Gosse  
Jerome Goyena  
Daniel Kolber  
Amanada Moundford  
Jacob Pagliaro  
Troy Pawczuk  
Norman Pfeiffer  
Nathaniel Yarrow

## SUSPENDED MEMBERS

Zachary Bines  
Christopher Bray  
Jeff Cudahy  
Meagan De Lima  
Samuel Denton  
Cameron Draper  
Elias Dummer  
Tarkek Haddad  
Mark Kowgier  
James Mitchell  
David Mordak  
Matthew Soliveri  
Gregory Steele  
Gergely Vass

## EXPELLED MEMBERS

William Bell  
Paul Kinsman  
Loeden Learn  
Omar Martin  
Goran Nikolic  
In Hye Park  
Todd Reynolds  
Gary Rugala  
Aidan Stoddard

## REINSTATED MEMBERS

Andrew Mactaggart  
Doug McBrien  
David Thierry  
Darcy Yates

## RESIGNED MEMBERS

Ashraf Alja'Oni  
David Baldry  
Matthew Doherty  
Zachary Fratoni  
Tia Hofgraff  
Albin-Karl Lebel Viens  
Codi Michel  
Frank Musico  
Tommy Parham  
Christabel Pinto  
Andrew Rosario  
Alicia Santos  
Adam Shoji

The HMG Local 293 Office sends out regular emails to members to keep you advised of your membership status and other important AFM news.

But we need you to tell us about any changes to your contact information.

This includes any changes to your email address, phone number or home address.

Call 905-525-4040 or email

( [office@HamiltonMusicians.org](mailto:office@HamiltonMusicians.org) )

to make sure we have your correct contact information.



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- ➔ Email and phone technical support



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## Upcoming MPTF Gigs



The MPTF (Music Performance Trust Fund) provides grant money to AFM members who give free, public music performances.

### **Some of the basic criteria to receive this funding include:**

- 1) The member (or majority of band members) must belong to the Hamilton Musicians' Guild.
- 2) All band members must belong to the AFM.
- 3) The Music Event must be open to all members of the public and be free for everyone.
- 4) The Event cannot be held in conjunction with a religious celebration, fundraising event, private event, or political event.,

- 5) The Event must take place within the HMG jurisdiction (roughly, Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville and up to and including Georgetown).
- 6) For more details, contact the HMG office or visit our website <https://www.HamiltonMusicians.org>

For the current year, we are able to provide 100% funding for gigs at Retirement Homes and similar residences (\$ 200 solo, \$165 for leader/\$145 for 'sidemen'), and for gigs at schools with Educational Content (\$165 solo, \$165/\$145 for bands).

All other gigs can be funded at 50% of Scale if the event host matches the other 50%.

If you negotiate a performance fee at less than Scale, we cannot involve the MPTF. You should try to get as much as you can at or above scale. Since we are subsidizing the co-sponsor, this should be quite straightforward.

For example, let's use a Trio. Scale is \$ 165 for the leader and \$ 145 for each 'sideman' for a total of \$ 455 (less 5% work dues). We would invoice the event host for half of Scale (\$ 227.50) and the MPTF would pay the other half. In this example, the band leader will take home \$ 156.75 and the sidemen will take home \$ 137.75 each. Any extra that you negotiated with the event host will of course be added to that.

Since May we have funded over 175 musicians in over 75 gigs ranging from solo acts to 5-piece bands at street festivals with the Hamilton Waterfront Trust, Dundas BIA, Concession Street BIA, and in Hamilton Public Library branches around the region. Upcoming plans include funding Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra visits to area schools, seasonal festivities in December, Black History Month in February, International Women's Day in March, and of course Jazz Appreciation month in April.

If you might have an upcoming gig, contact us before you negotiate your deal to find out if it might qualify for an MPTF grant. If we can subsidize the gig, then you should be able to negotiate a higher rate with the gig host.

# Local 293 StreetBeats..... Spotlight on Tom Wilson

- by Paul Panchezak

We are always proud to say Local 293 has had many illustrious members over a long history of over a century. Quite a number of them have received honours, awards and distinctions for their praiseworthy careers.

However, none quite equal being named to the Order of Canada. In 2023 one of our longtime union brothers, Tom Tehohàhake Wilson, received that prestigious title. He now shares that membership with some of the most famous names in Canadian history. The Order of Canada is one of the country's top honours given to those "who make extraordinary contributions to the nation".

Tom Wilson is a lifelong Hamiltonian with a musical career that stretches back half a century. He was still a teenager when he began performing at Hamilton's thriving coffee house scene in the 1970's. By the 80's he had gone electric with The Florida Razors. Locally the group attracted a loyal and enthusiastic fan base during their rather brief history.

Tom's next group was the one that vaulted him on to the national and international stage. Junkhouse with the help of a deal with Sony and steady video rotation on Much Music made Tom a major player on the Canadian music scene. In 1996 he united with two virtuoso guitarists, Colin Linden and Steven Fearing, to form the Canadian supergroup Blackie and the Rodeo Kings.

And there's more than that; including solo albums, his band Lee Harvey Osmond and recently he has collaborated musically with his son, Thompson, in project titled Tehohahake. Besides performing and recording Tom is a songwriter who has his compositions recorded by the likes of George Thorogood, Mavis Staples, Colin James, Billy Ray Cyrus and many others.



Paul Panchezak



As if that's not enough to keep one person pretty busy. It's only one side of Tom Wilson. Tom also has a passion for the visual arts as well. He has exhibited his canvases at galleries across North America. In 2015 he was commissioned by the City of Hamilton to paint a mural depicting the history of music in Hamilton.

His Residential School Exhibit has made an impact at The Stratford Festival, Queens University and the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory Cultural Centre.

Adopted as a child Tom Wilson learned as an adult who his birth parents were. It was revealed that in fact his heritage is indigenous. He is descended from the Kahnawa First Nation.



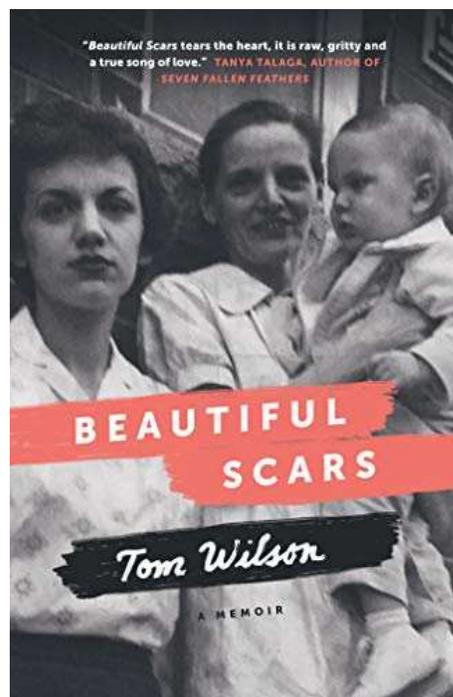
Since then, he has established the Tom Wilson Bursary in 2020 to support year one indigenous students from Ontario secondary schools completing an undergraduate program in any faculty.

Over the course of his long career, aside from his artistic accomplishments, Tom Wilson has been honoured in many ways – from Juno Awards to honorary university degrees. But none carry the same esteem as the Order of Canada.

Following his investiture he stated, “Yesterday in Ottawa I was honoured to receive the Order of Canada from Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon”. In recognition of his new found roots the Order of Canada acknowledged him “for his contribution to Canadian arts and culture as a musician, storyteller and visual artist, and for his advocacy for Indigenous communities in Canada”.

In accepting the honour Tom paid tribute to “everyone who has walked with me on my journey. I will carry it with gratitude and I’ll continue to work to create a more loving, patient and caring community and a future that we can all build together.”

If you want to know more about Tom Wilson’s colourful journey you can check out his published memoir “Beautiful Scars” or Shane Belcourt’s 2022 film documentary “Beautiful Scars”.





**Larry Feudo  
President**

Larry has been playing Roots and Blues with Trickbag for over 35 years.

A multi-instrumentalist who plays guitar, harp and mandolin he's well versed in playing several acoustic and electric styles.

He's had the pleasure of working with mentors Kelly Jay (Crowbar) and King Biscuit Boy for several decades.

Trickbag has released five albums that met with critical acclaim and they continue to play everywhere from festivals to local venues.

One particularly rare honour was to get to play radio station KFFA's King Biscuit Time Show with long time host Sunshine Sonny Payne in Arkansas-home to the late great Sonny Boy Williamson's radio show.

There have been many great memories over the years playing great music with talented friends too numerous to mention.

Larry continues to serve as President of the Hamilton Musicians' Guild since 2012 and is also currently Vice President of the Canadian Conference Board of the Canadian Federation of Musicians.

He looks forward to serving in both roles in the New Year and continuing in the advocacy of our musicians.



## **Reg Denis First Vice-President**

Reg Denis joined the HMG in 1971 and enjoyed a brilliant career as a professional musician alongside his longtime collaborator (and love of his life) Patti Warden.

Reg is still making music and serves on the Executive Board of the Hamilton Musicians' Guild as 1st Vice President.

Formerly of Linx, The Only 1's, Royal Order, Tangerine Forest, Pork—both versions— and Crackers, Reg received his 50-year HMG membership pin and certificate in 2023.

When Linx had run its course in the mid 1970s, founding members and Hamilton natives guitarist Reg Denis and bassist Patricia Warden decided to put together a new act – one that was as memorable on stage for its presence as it was good musically, and one that was a little less serious than their previous groups.

They recruited vocalist Monte Hawes and drummer George Holyoke, and naming themselves Crackers, they became one of Canada's first truly independent groups, playing the local area. They then expanded throughout the rest of Ontario and then into Quebec, developing a style that showed influences ranging from Frank Zappa and Jimi Hendrix to Charlie Daniels, as well as blues and jazz.

As they progressed, they began throwing in some comedic elements into their live shows, and were noticed by manager Craig Nicholson of Pizazz Productions. They became regular favourites at Toronto's El Mocambo and in Montreal at the Maples Inn, complete with comedy, shocking visuals, and X-rated antics.



## **Paul Panchezak Second Vice-President**

For over thirty years Paul has been part of and is a founding member of the popular Hamilton-based blues band, Trickbag.

He also spent almost twenty years drumming with the legendary Richard Newell (aka King Biscuit Boy). With Richard he participated in recordings that were nominated for two Junos.

In the 1980's Paul toured with Crowbar which included Richard Newell as well as Canadian musical legend Kelly Jay.

Over a professional career that began when he was a teenager he has played and recorded with a wide variety of artists and was nominated three times in the "Drummer of the Year" category at the Hamilton Music Awards.

Aside from Trickbag Paul stays active teaching drums locally and once a week he hosts the long running "Breakfast of Champions" program on CFMU-FM.

He is a proud member of the Hamilton Musicians' Guild for more than fifty years. He presently holds the executive position of "Second Vice President".



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## **John P. Morris Sergeant-at-Arms**

'Big John' Morris has been tripping the night fantastic at local nightclubs and halls for quite a few years.

As the leader of Big John and the Nite Trippers, he entertains crowded dance floors with classic soul music that calls to mind artists like Otis Redding, Sam Cooke and Ray Charles.

Born and raised in Hamilton's north end on Hess St. North, John has hometown roots that go back generations. At an early age he began singing with his brothers as a means of bringing home a little cash to his mom in order to help out with household expenses. His brothers aside, he cites his mother as the real musical inspiration at home. "She used to sing to us a lot," he says.

These informal musical performances with his family whet John's appetite for striking out to establish his own identity. Speaking of his earliest musical influences, he mentions The Platters, Louis Armstrong, Little Richard and Chuck Berry as being inspirational, as well as Ray Smith of "Rockin' Little Angel" fame, the flamboyant wrestler/ singer/ entertainer Sweet Daddy Siki, Jack Carter, and talented family members like half brother Harrison Kennedy and extended family like Hamilton's musical royalty—the Washingtons – Bobby, Jackie, Reg and Dick.

"I am so happy," he says, "that I can bring people pleasure by my singing— that makes me feel good inside. And being part of the HMG executive is an honour that I treasure."



## **Ron Palangio Marshall**

Ron was born and raised in North Bay Ontario where he began studying guitar at the age of twelve. He moved to Hamilton Ontario in 1978 to study Jazz and Classical guitar at Mohawk College's Applied Music Program.

After graduating he performed as a freelance guitarist around the Toronto-Hamilton area. Ron continued his studies at McMaster University where he graduated with an Honours Bachelor of Music (Summa Cum Laude) followed by a Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto.

Ron taught secondary school music in Hamilton for 29 years and led several award winning concert and jazz ensembles, he was also founder and coordinator of The Golden Horseshoe Musicfest from 2005 to 2014. Ron retired from teaching in 2016 and has spent his time performing.

His versatility along with his skills in sight reading and improvisation made Ron an in demand guitarist in and around the area performing for professional theatre productions, big bands, dance, pop and classic rock groups.



**Ryan McKenna**  
**Director**

Ryan McKenna is pleased to be re-elected to the position of Director on the Board of the Local 293.

A member of the HMG since 2001, Ryan has served on the board for eight consecutive years, including a term as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Guild.

Ryan is the frontman of the recording and touring Celtic act, the Steel City Rovers. Ryan also composes, co-composes and authors the original work of the band.

He has been playing professionally with his brother and fellow Guild member, Joel McKenna since joining the Local.

Beginning work in Ontario pubs and restaurants, Ryan has expanded his performance accomplishments to include appearances in half of all U.S. States as well as Ireland and the UK, but Hamilton will always be home!

Passionate about connecting and networking with people, before Ryan joined the Executive Board, he became active on the Organizing Committee for the 2017 Canadian Conference.

This led to his greater involvement with the Guild which he believes then became relational rather than transactional, which is an excellent example of the AFM's organizing philosophy and approach to member engagement. Ryan encourages all in the membership to get involved!

Who knows where it may lead?"



## **Lorelee McGuirl Director**

Lorelee McGuirl is a Juno-nominated vocalist, songwriter, educator, conductor, and multi-instrumentalist whose dynamic career spans more than two decades across performance, education, and community leadership. Based in the Hamilton–Burlington region, Lorelee is widely recognized for her powerful stage presence, artistic versatility, and unwavering commitment to nurturing musical excellence in others.

A classically trained singer with roots in jazz, soul, folk, and contemporary music, Lorelee has fronted numerous acclaimed projects, including The Soul Cats, Celtic Steelers, and multiple tribute productions. Her voice and artistry have taken her to concert halls, festivals, churches, and theatres across Canada, earning her a reputation as one of the region's most expressive and emotionally compelling performers.

Equally dedicated to education, Lorelee is a beloved music teacher whose holistic approach integrates vocal technique, theory, composition, performance, movement, and music history. She is also a conductor and ensemble leader, guiding choirs, student groups, and worship teams with a blend of excellence, enthusiasm, and authenticity.

As a member of the Board of Directors for the Hamilton Musicians Guild, Lorelee advocates for fair treatment, professional standards, and meaningful opportunities for musicians of all ages and backgrounds. With her rare combination of artistry, leadership, and heart, she continues to inspire audiences, students, and fellow musicians throughout the community.



## John Staley Director



“My school holiday concert has been cancelled. Frosty the Snowman has the same name as a drug dealer, Rudolph is a victim of bullying, Jingle Bells denies global warming and White Christmas is racist.”

John Staley has been a working musician for 61 years and have been a member of the Hamilton Musicians' Guild since 1965.

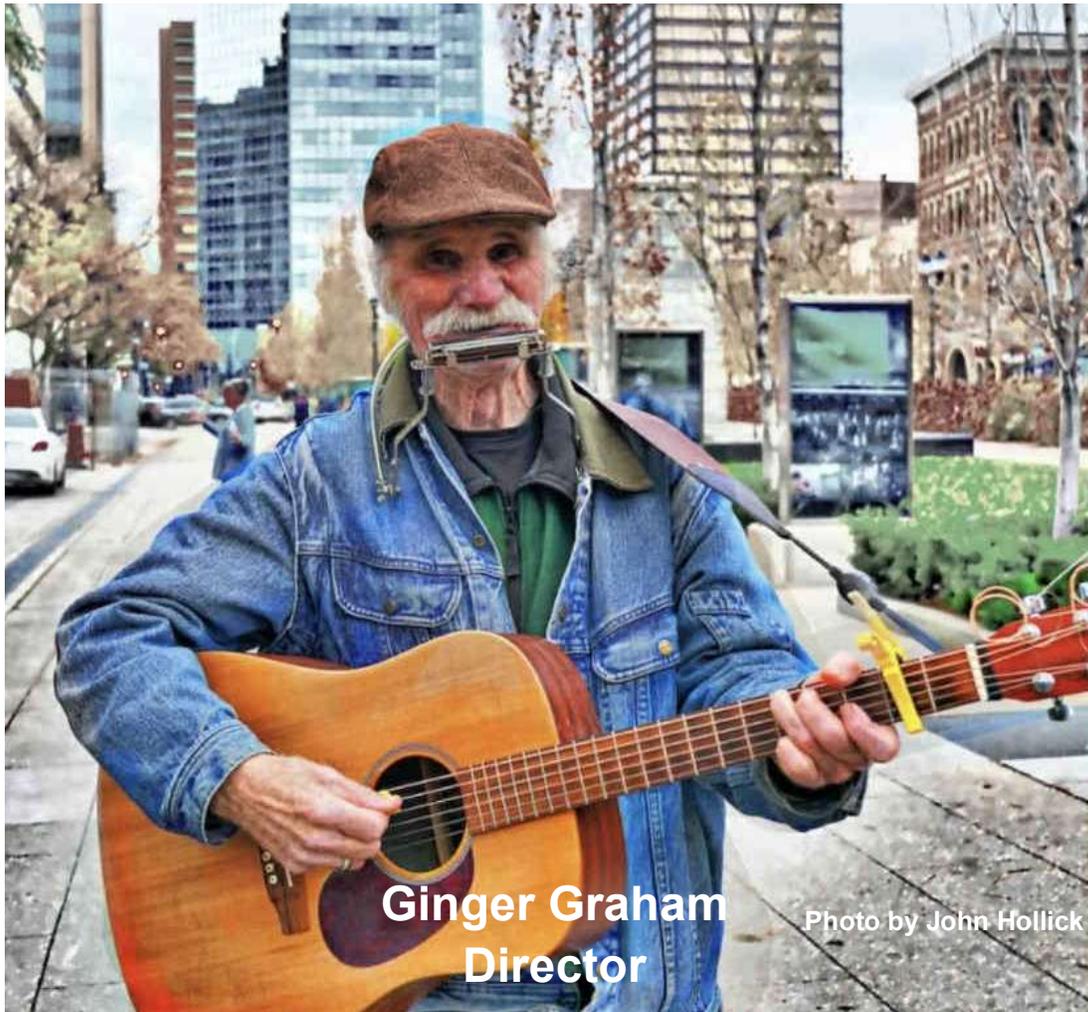
Before taking up bass guitar with the vision of becoming a rock star, he began by playing euphonium then cornet in the Salvation Army band. Later, in high school, he played trumpet.

Although a “weekend warrior”, music has always been an important mainstay in his life.

Before retiring, he was a Development Engineer for the City of Burlington.

The following is a brief synopsis of other worthy pursuits:

- Hamilton Musicians Guild – President, Vice-President
- City of Burlington – C.U.P.E. Secretary, C.U.P.E. Local President, City mediator, City Assistance program councilor
- International Guild of Knot Tyers (England) – Chairman of International Executive Board
- International Guild of Knot Tyers of North America – Founder, President, board member.



With a music career spanning over five decades, we are pleased to introduce our newest member of the Executive Board: Ginger Graham.

Since embarking on his musical journey in 1972, Ginger has had the privilege of traveling across North America, crafting and performing folk music at bars and festivals, such as the Mariposa Folk Festival.

Some of the highlights of his career include sharing the stage with renowned artists such as The Good Brothers, Alan Rody, Murray McLauchlan, the Molly Maguires, and Valdy. In 1984, he wrote his original song, '1000 Words.'

Prior to his music career, he made a brief appearance in the 1969 film 'Paint Your Wagon.' Following a five-year hiatus, he returned to Ontario in 1972 and resumed his musical pursuits which currently include folk gospel music at local churches and festivals.

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## It's official. The Junos are coming back to Hamilton in 2026



*Josh Ross, from Burlington, Ont., performs live at the 2024 Juno Awards in Halifax. The awards will return to Hamilton in 2026. (CARAS/Ryan Bolton Photography)*

Canada's biggest night in music — the Juno Awards — is returning to Hamilton in 2026, the seventh time the city is hosting the event, organizers announced Thursday.

Hamilton, which last hosted the Junos in 2015, will once again honour the nation's top musical talent, with the 2026 Juno week set for Thursday, March 26, to Sunday, March 29.

The event will culminate with the 55th Annual Juno Awards, the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (CARAS) said in a news release.

CARAS president and CEO Allan Reid said Hamilton's dynamic music scene and rich cultural heritage make it "an ideal location" for the awards.

"We are thrilled to return to Hamilton and be one of the first events in Hamilton's newly renovated downtown arena," Reid said in the release.

"The city and province of Ontario continue to show their passion for music and the arts. We're looking forward to 2026."



**Marie Phillips**

Marie Phillips, BA (Hons), RRC, CFDS, PFP, FCSI, MFA-P, has been in the financial services industry since 1992.

Wealth Professionals named Marie as the 2023 Female Trailblazer of the Year & as well as placing her amongst the leading Top 50 Women in Wealth. She has received the IPC Cares Award for Community Service, Value of Advice Awards, Best Client Experience Awards, and the George R. Robinson Award (from the Hamilton Musicians' Guild), and has been published / profiled in a wide variety of articles including BNN, the Investment Executive and the Wealth Professional.

Marie was a recipient of a music bursary and, although she did not pursue a career in music, the ARTS sector is where her philanthropy is focused. An active member in her community, Marie volunteers her time advocating for financial literacy and supports many more initiatives that helps recognize achievement and advancement for the Arts.

A graphic with the word "MUSIC" in large letters. The 'I' is replaced by a photo of Marie Phillips speaking at a podium. Below the letters, it says "FINANCIAL LITERACY IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY". To the right is a photo of a group of people, and below that is a poster for Tom Wilson's Mohawk Symphony.

*"She opened their eyes to some enlightening concepts that were unfamiliar to them."*

Marie actively volunteers her time advocating for financial literacy and philanthropy in the arts sector and is also an amateur musician.

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## P2 Work Permit FAQs:

**1) USCIS Fees:** The fees for the US **Department of Homeland Security** are as follows:

Regular Processing: \$510 USD

Premium Processing: \$510 USD + \$2805 USD (the two payments must be separate)

### 2) Processing Times:

Please note that processing times are determined by the US government, not the American Federation of Musicians. To view USCIS processing times click here <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>: -> Select "I-129 Petition for a Non-immigrant Worker, then, -> Under Form Category, select "P – Athletes, Artists, and Entertainers. The processing time noted is the length of time any specific USCIS Service Center took to complete 80% of files over the prior 6 months. Therefore, the file may be approved within that timeline, or in less time than that noted.

USCIS determines, through its central processing office in Texas, which Service Center (California or Vermont) the petitions are forwarded to. Approximately 35-days after the file has been in processing, the AFM will be advised which office is adjudicating the Visa, thereafter we will be able to provide a rough estimate of processing time remaining. In addition to USCIS processing times, please add additional time for the AFM office to review, process and courier the petition to USCIS.

While we try to submit all applications to USCIS within 72-hours of our office receiving them, there can be delays due to the volume of applications, holidays, or shipping delays.

\*If you are a Permanent Resident, please take into consideration Visa Appointment Wait Times when you are preparing your application.

**3) Transfer Notice:** If you check the status of your application online and see that USCIS has "transferred" your file, this is normal. All applications are sent to the Texas USCIS office, and they transfer cases as needed to the Vermont and California offices. These are new procedures that the USCIS has implemented and will not affect the processing time of your application.

**4) Consulate Interviews (Permanent Residents):** Only P visa applicants with a prior visa who are applying in the same classification within 48 months of that prior visa's expiration date are eligible to have their interview requirement waived.

**5) Canadian Banks Not Issuing USD Money Orders:** Some banks across the country, most notably RBC, have stopped issuing USD Money Orders. If you are unable to obtain a USD money order through your Canadian bank, you may consider the following:

- \* Obtain a money order from a US-based bank - you must hold an account or have other access to a US financial institution
- \* If you hold or have access to a credit card issued by a US Bank, the fees may be remitted under the USCIS form at the following link: <https://www.uscis.gov/g-1450>
- \* Obtain a money order from the US Postal Service
- \* Inquire with a close personal or business contact who may have the ability to assist in obtaining a money order through either their Canadian or US financial institution.
- \* If none of the above is possible, please contact [immigration@afm.org](mailto:immigration@afm.org) or (416) 391-5161

## Tuning up for airport security

Boarding an airplane with a precious musical instrument can be a worrying experience, but it doesn't have to be. And while some musicians are frequent fliers, others may never have taken an instrument in the air before.

CATSA knows that instruments can be rare and fragile, and wants to work with you to make sure you, and your instrument, arrive safely at your destination. Here's what you need to know, and the steps you can take, to make the security-screening process harmonious.



Passengers *do* have some choices about how to go through security.

### Carry-on or checked?

You can choose between checking your instrument with the airline or bringing it into the cabin as carry-on luggage.

Consult your airline ahead of time to determine if your instrument qualifies as a carry-on (depending on its size, it may have to be checked).

- Remember that most airlines limit the number of carry-on items you may bring.
- The airline may give you the option of purchasing a separate ticket for your instrument.
- If you opt for carry-on, you must comply with the rules for permitted items.

Whether carry-on or checked, it is up to you to ensure that fragile items are packed properly and safely.

### X-ray or manual search?

If you opt to bring your instrument as carry-on, or purchase a separate ticket, you'll bring it with you through the security screening checkpoint. You have a choice here as well: you can allow your instrument case to be scanned with the X-ray machine or you may request a manual search.

Kudos to Local 180 The Harp for first seeing this notice.

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# Canadians fight back as CRA cracks down on CERB benefit recipients

At his home studio in Vancouver, B.C., musician Mike Wetering is among more than 3,500 Canadians who have been locked in federal court fighting repayment of pandemic-era benefits.

For two decades, Mike Wetering had been a fixture of the Vancouver music scene, playing regular shows at casinos, the Coppertank Grill, and The Backstage Lounge on Granville Island.

In 2019, he was in the process of pivoting his business model, investing money in a home recording studio and attempting to place his music—rock-inspired tunes influenced by everything from jazz to the Congolese dance music soukous—in film, television and video games.

Then, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and as with so many Canadians, businesses shut and work dried up. Wetering received a total of \$38,000 from the federal government in pandemic aid, a lifeline he said saved him from abject poverty.

## Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

Find out more at  
[canada.ca/en/department-finance/  
economic-response-plan](https://canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan)

### Who is eligible?

-  workers sick with COVID-19 and no access to paid leave
-  workers quarantined or caring for someone sick with COVID-19
-  working parents at home without pay because children are sick OR need care due to school/daycare closures
-  workers currently employed but not paid due to insufficient work/employer asked you not to work
-  contract workers or self-employed not eligible for EI

About a year and a half later, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) contacted him with some bad news: the business costs he had written off in the year leading up to the pandemic meant he didn't meet the \$5,000 income threshold to receive COVID benefits. He was ordered to pay back all the money Ottawa had given him.

"I was just kind of shocked and paralyzed," said the musician. "It felt heavy handed. Why are they putting me on this track?"

Five years later, Wetering is one of more than 3,500 Canadians who have been locked in legal action seeking to access or overturn pandemic-era repayment orders issued by Canada's national tax agency.

Of those, only 100 applications to the federal court were granted judicial review. Another 2,628 were dismissed, withdrawn or had some other outcome, while 820 are still awaiting a final decision, according to data BIV obtained from the CRA.

Federal Court acting Chief Justice Martine St-Louis declined an interview request. But in a statement, her office said the spike in applications has placed an enormous increased burden on the federal court, with the number of non-immigration applications for judicial review doubling since 2022.

A "substantial" number of those cases are due to pandemic benefits, a heavy administrative burden made worse because most of the people bringing applications to the court don't have a lawyer.

According to CRA spokesperson Déborah Cléry, the tax agency has taken a "proactive approach" by trying to resolve judicial applications before they make it to a hearing.

By Oct. 29, 2025, 361 cases made it to a federal court hearing, and 71 per cent of those were dismissed.

## **'Opaque' review process made worse by lack of lawyers**

Nabila Qureshi, a staff lawyer at the Ontario-based Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC), said the federal court applications identified by BIV represent a fraction of tens of thousands of Canadians facing the prospect of repaying pandemic benefits.

"There's so many barriers to getting to federal court for the average Canadian," Qureshi said. "Many people are not represented. They can't afford a lawyer."

After Wetering was told he needed to repay COVID benefits, he sought help from his local member of Parliament and was eventually advised it would cost about \$60,000 to argue the case with a lawyer. He said he had no choice but to represent himself.

"It's brutal. It feels like I'm being bullied. It feels like they're using the courts and their lawyers as their hitmen," said Wetering. "I'm doing this all on my own dime. They're doing it on a government wage and retirement package. There's an asymmetry of burden here."

The CRA's attempts to reclaim pandemic benefits usually starts with a letter warning the person they were never eligible for the payments. The individual then has two chances to request a review. If those fail, filing a request for a judicial review in federal court is often the final "kick at the can," said Qureshi.

If successful in court, the case is sent back to the CRA for another review.

In a statement, the CRA said that to “maintain impartiality and transparency” different officials carry out the first and second review.

But according to Qureshi, who has advised on about 200 overpayment cases, the process remains “very opaque.”

“The decision tells you almost nothing about why they decided against you.”

The lawyer said she has received a number of requests for help from people across Canada, including B.C.

“People across Canada are experiencing this and there’s very little help outside of Ontario,” Qureshi said.

Kevin Love, a staff lawyer with B.C.’s Community Legal Assistance Society, said he has been in contact with scores of people asked to repay a long list of COVID-19 benefits.



“The demand for services is outstripping what ourselves and other organizations can provide,” said Love.

Nearly all of the people that have contacted Love’s pro bono group earn very low incomes, and many were clearly eligible for a pandemic benefit but were given bad information by the government on where and how to apply, he said.

“These aren’t people who frittered away money on luxuries. These are people who spent the money on food, rent,” said Love. “These are people who tried to act honestly and got bad information.”

CRA provided bad information, claim critics

John Stapleton, a policy fellow at Toronto Metropolitan University's National Institute on Ageing, said the CRA has published information on its website he later found contradicted the law.

In one example, Stapleton said he advised people to count honoraria in their tax returns because the CRA said to do so on their website—advice that has repeatedly been proven unlawful in court.

“I phoned the CRA and they confirmed it,” he said. “I did webinars across Canada telling people.”

Like Wetering, many people are being denied applications to cancel repayment of COVID benefits because they couldn't prove they made more than \$5,000 in the previous tax year.

Medical retiree Jerry Browne provided a Vancouver federal court with bank records for over \$5,700 in e-transfers and deposits to try to prove he had augmented his pension by repairing electronics.

In May 2025, the judge in the case found the documents did not include full account information or establish the source of the funds. Without invoices or receipts, the CRA could not confirm the deposits came from his self-employment activities, as required by law.

Victoria mother Shanel Higham was forced to repay \$12,000 in pandemic payments after a court found that—while she lost two of three jobs and desperately needed the aid to support her family and cover living expenses—she still earned \$1,000 over the eligibility period.

In her July 2025 ruling, Justice Danielle Ferron acknowledged Higham had struggled “to pay all her bills and feed her family.”

The judge ultimately ruled the CRA is not given discretion to circumvent the law or consider financial hardship, regardless of how unfair the criteria may seem to low-income people relying on multiple jobs.

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How to deal with CRA's Request for Repayment?

A photograph of a man in a dark suit, white shirt, and pink tie, wearing glasses and standing with his arms crossed.

## **CRA targeting low-income Canadians, says lawyer**

In 2023, CRA head Bob Hamilton said the tax agency would not conduct a full review of more than \$15.5 billion in Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy benefits the auditor general reported may have been sent to ineligible recipients.

Hamilton, who disagreed with the auditor general's findings, said at the time that "based on what we've seen so far, it wouldn't be worth the effort."

Instead auditing businesses that may have improperly received a wage subsidy, Qureshi said the spike in federal court cases shows the CRA appears to be targeting low-wage workers who live payment-to-payment.

"They're spending all this time and effort going after some pretty vulnerable people at a time of pretty high inflation," said the lawyer.

According to Qureshi, people receiving the CRA's overpayment requests often work as cleaners, babysitters or artists—jobs that almost always pay in cash and rarely involve receipts or a formal contract.

She said the CRA has often responded with harsh and unrealistic criteria it uses to decide who had a job and how much money they earned. That's led to an untold number of erroneous determinations, only a fraction of which end up in court.

The CRA's Cléry pushed back on the idea it was targeting low-income Canadians. She said that due to upfront verification measures, agency audits "largely confirmed" that businesses that benefited from the wage subsidy program had a high level of compliance compared to individual Canadians who received emergency benefits.

"The Government was clear throughout the pandemic that while there would not be any penalties for those who applied for these benefits in good faith, individuals would have to repay those benefits to which they were not entitled," said the CRA in a statement.

The agency added that it is "bound by the law" to assess entitlements based on clear eligibility requirements.

Love said that the benefit programs were rightly rushed by government officials. But over time, he said that has led to an evolving review process that makes submitting required documentation extremely challenging.

People are getting repayment letters from the CRA with vague requests, said Love. And when the case is sent for review, he said the results don't explain how the tax agency came to its conclusions.

"A basic sense of fairness is you know why the decision being made was made," said Love. "It's not sufficient and it's not transparent."

## 'I think they just lost their way'

Earlier this month, the federal government's latest budget says Ottawa is aiming to simplify Canada's tax system and reduce administrative costs. Those changes mean ending the luxury tax on aircraft, yachts and other leisure vessels and eliminating the Underused Housing Tax, a measure aimed at discouraging foreign ownership of vacant or underused residential property in Canada.

At the same time, the budget earmarks an additional \$123 million to collect overpayments of pandemic emergency benefits.

Stapleton, who spent 28 years as a benefits designer in Ontario's Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, estimates the public cost of litigating a pandemic overpayment case can climb as high as \$200,000—far more than what the CRA is attempting to recoup in pandemic benefits.

"I think they figured it's going to be a pain in the neck going after the yachts and airplanes," said Stapleton. "They're going after people that don't fight back and can't fight back because they don't have the resources."

He added: "I think they just lost their way."



Stapleton's estimate of the public cost of litigation does not include the time and money put in by pro bono lawyers or the people involved in the case.

The CRA disputed claims it is spending more to recover COVID-19 benefits than it is recovering.

The agency estimates it paid out \$13.86 billion in benefits it later redetermined should never have been released.

As of March 31, 2025, the CRA said it had recovered more than \$2.83 billion of that sum at a cost of \$702 million. Those costs included appeals, collections, compliance and verification, as well as corporate costs such as employee benefit plans and accommodation.

It's not clear how much more Canada's court system has spent on benefits litigation, nor the expenses borne by individuals like Wetering.



Back at his home in Vancouver, Wetering said he personally spends multiple hours a week preparing his own legal documents and researching his case.

In June, a judge denied his request for a judicial review, though the amount he was told to repay was reduced to \$24,000 from an initial \$38,000. He is now preparing to file a second petition to the court.

"I think we can all agree that the government should act in the case of fraud. But these people are not frauds. They're not cheats," said Love.

"The federal government is using an incredible number of resources on this. It's clogging up the courts."

Love added: "The question, is to what end?"

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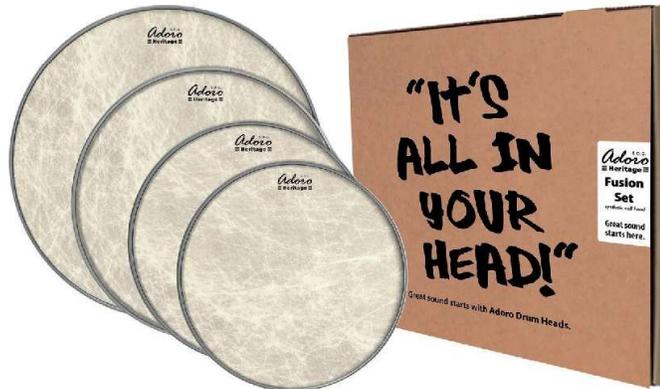


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January 13, 2025  
Ottawa, Ontario

The Canadian Conference of Musicians' is proud to announce an agreement with ARTISTI!

ARTISTI is the Canadian licensing body that has been managing the collection and managing of neighbouring rights for musicians and artists in Quebec since 1997.

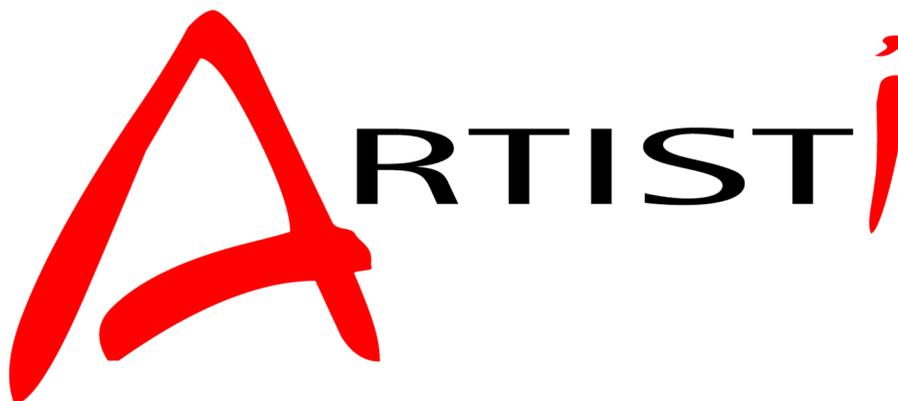
Upon the winding down of business by our former partner, MROC, ARTISTI has welcomed the vast majority of former MROC members and has approached the Canadian Conference to form an agreement similar to the one we had with MROC.

After productive negotiations we are delighted to announce that talks were successfully concluded in late December 2024.

This achievement was possible because of the positive relationship among all the parties involved.

Canadian Locals will direct all CFM members, to join forces with ARTISTI to ensure that their rights and royalties are protected and efficiently managed while enjoying personalized support and exclusive resources.

**All HMG members are encouraged to sign up at <https://www.Artisti.ca/en/>**





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### Sending your instrument through the X-ray

If the instrument case is small enough to go through the X-ray machine safely, place it in a bin – don't hesitate to ask for assistance if you're not sure, and mention if the item is fragile.

### Choosing a manual search

If the case is too large for the X-ray machine, or if you prefer to bypass the machine, your case and instrument will be manually searched by a screening officer.

- The screening officer will be careful with your instrument, however you should mention to the officer that the item is valuable, and if it is fragile.
- You may ask the officer to explain each step of the process before taking the action, so you can provide any special handling instructions.
- The officer will need to remove the instrument from its case in order to conduct a visual inspection of the instrument and a manual inspection of the case, including an explosive trace detection swab.
- Afterwards, the officer will offer to repack the case or let you repack it yourself.

Screening officers handle all passengers' belongings with care, but please let the officers know how important your instrument is to you and provide special handling information as early as possible during the screening process.

### *Be ready for automated screening lanes — at home and abroad*

New CATSA Plus security lines have been installed at some airports in Canada, and there are similar automated lines in other countries. The new lines allow several passengers to divest their belongings at once, all sending bins to the X-ray machine. This makes the process more efficient, but travellers should be aware that it also means their bins may be interspersed with those of other passengers, and they may lose sight of their bins momentarily as they travel along the conveyor belt and through the X-ray.



*At CATSA Plus lines, remember:*

- You control how your items are divested and can choose to put your instrument case in your final bin so you can watch for it exiting the X-ray.
- As with regular screening lines, you may request a manual search so your instrument case does not need to be placed on the conveyor belt.

Kudos to Local 180 The Harp for first seeing this notice.