

## **The Halifax Sound**

*Live Music and the Economic Development of Halifax*



Innovation Systems  
Research Network



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*Inspiring Minds*

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Photographic illustrations | Jeffry Haggett



Seahorse Tavern

## Executive Summary

A five-year national study of the social dynamics of economic performance in Canadian city-regions is profiling Halifax as a regional economic hub. The study seeks to identify and document the factors that enhance innovation and growth in city-regions such as Halifax.

Halifax is the major centre of population in Atlantic Canada and a natural draw for workers in cultural and creative industries. An unexpected but important finding of the Halifax case study has highlighted the role of the live music scene in attracting talented and creative young people to the city-region. Moreover, extensive interviews indicated that the music scene helps to retain talented workers in a range of industries. The Halifax music scene thus contributes to creating a cultural ambience with significant implications for the city-region's ability to maintain and improve its economic performance. The vibrant night life sustained by live music performances attracts post-secondary students to the city, even in a national economic context where Nova Scotia tuition rates are significantly higher than in competitor provinces. Students support the research infrastructure essential to innovation in the region, while university and college graduates provide talented workers for local firms. Talented and creative workers point to the local music scene as an asset of the city-region that they find attractive and exciting. In sum, music plays a major role in the attractiveness of Halifax to people vital to the economic success of the city-region and of the province.

Recent changes in the nature of the music industry, with increased downloading of music and the decline of the recording industry (Stein-Sachs, 2006), mean that musicians are not tied to large centres like Toronto or New York in the same way they were previously. More musicians now produce their work independently and rely on performing and selling songs because opportunities for major recording contracts have diminished. In the wake of rising housing costs and gentrification in the largest cities, musicians and other culture sector workers have begun to move away from the trendy districts they once inhabited. Today's independent musicians are mobile and able to choose the places where they want to live and work. Halifax enjoys a current advantage in that it offers a supportive arts

environment, an attractive natural setting, a historic ambience, and abundant opportunities for young musicians to learn their art in affordable housing and rehearsal spaces. In Halifax, musicians can play to audiences in a wide variety of performance venues. Interviews with the music community indicate that the Halifax social scene is especially welcoming and open to newcomers; the warmth of Halifax music audiences contrasts markedly with musicians' experiences in many other cities.

While the study findings confirm the importance of job creation in providing opportunities for talented young people to choose to work in Halifax, it simultaneously underscores the role of live music in making Halifax an appealing prospect to creative workers. Live music of many genres – rock, Celtic, jazz, blues, hip-hop, pop, gospel, classical, alternative, country – thrives in Halifax. Music is part of the distinctive culture of the city, linked to a vibrant art and culture scene, and a dynamic downtown environment. Music gives Halifax a comparative advantage in the creative economy.

The future viability of the Halifax music scene is not guaranteed. Rising housing prices and threats to the range of music performance venues may undermine the long term health of the music scene. Downtown revitalization plans that promote urban development and densification may lead to increasing property prices and gentrification which can undermine cultural facilities and uses in the urban core: this has been the fate of arts and culture districts in cities like New York, Manchester, and Toronto.

A decline in the music scene could undermine the attractiveness of Halifax and Nova Scotia to potential post-secondary students, and could hamper efforts to retain talented and creative workers in research and high technology sectors. The province of Nova Scotia has adopted forward-thinking strategies and funding programs to support and develop the music industry in the province; Halifax Regional Municipality should follow suit to ensure that the city-region continues to provide a welcoming and positive environment for a creative, diverse, and supportive music scene. Halifax could work with Music Nova Scotia, the East Coast Music Association, and other members of the local community to develop a Halifax music sector strategy. The benefits of a vibrant music scene and a supportive infrastructure for the music industry in Halifax extend beyond the city-region to the province as a whole.

The creative economy is growing in importance, as municipal government has recognized in its *Economic Strategy* and in the *Cultural Plan*. Turning the potential of comparative advantage into effective implementation will require careful evaluation and appropriate commitment. Cities like Austin (Texas), Seattle (Washington), and Nashville (Tennessee) have built strong city brands and billion-dollar economies on the music industry. They demonstrate what is possible for those who believe in the music.



Neptune Theatre

## Economic Performance in City-Regions: Towards creative cities

A national study on the *Social Dynamics of Economic Performance* is investigating 16 Canadian city-regions of varying sizes.<sup>1</sup> The Halifax case study examined data from the 2001 and 2006 census; researchers also conducted 90 in-depth interviews between 2006 and 2008 with representatives of firms in industrial clusters, talented and creative workers, development intermediaries and associations, and government organizations. The study aims to understand the extent to which the social dynamics of city-regions may contribute to or detract from economic performance and innovation. Drawing on creative cities theories, researchers are examining the social characteristics and other features of place that may affect the choices that talented and creative workers in various industries make in deciding where to live and work.

*Creative communities are important drivers in Canada's economy. They project unique identities that act as magnets for skilled, creative people and for business investment. (Conference Board of Canada, 2008, p. 52)*

Over the last decade the ideas of Richard Florida (2002, 2005) have had an immense influence on development policy across North America. Florida suggested that in the new economy, economic growth depends on cities' abilities to attract talented and creative workers. Scholars (e.g., Scott, 2000; Wojan et al, 2007) have highlighted the significance of creative industries to urban development: for instance, Currid (2007) recently documented the importance of the music industry and other arts to the New York economy and cultural vitality. Where once governments concentrated on "chasing smokestacks", today governments understand that promoting arts and culture provides important foundations for developing economic and social prosperity. Most Canadian and American cities have adjusted their development policies to focus on enhancing their creative potential and to make urban conditions more conducive to attracting talented workers.

Several sources have recently highlighted the role of creative industries in the Canadian economy. For instance, the Conference Board of Canada (2008)

<sup>1</sup> The research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through the Major Collaborative Research Initiatives program, grant 412-2005-1001. Dr David Wolfe of the University of Toronto is the principal investigator. The project runs from 2005 to 2011. For more on the project visit [www.utoronto.ca/isrn](http://www.utoronto.ca/isrn)

estimated that the economic footprint of the cultural economy in Canada in 2007 was \$84.6 billion. Barrieau (2004) completed a report on the economic impact and export potential of the culture sector in Atlantic Canada indicating that it was worth \$2.1 billion in 2002 and with appropriate policy and investment had even greater potential. The Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council (2006) noted that the culture sector employed 28,000 people in 2002 and contributed \$1.2 billion in GDP. In its most recent report, the Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network argues that the province “must embrace creativity as a driving force in the provincial economy and place it at the centre of our economic, community, and business development strategies” (Hamilton et al, 2009, p. 40).

*[Cultural industries] are frequently subject to competitive pressures that encourage individual firms to agglomerate together in dense specialized clusters or industrial districts, while at the same time their products circulate with increasing ease on global markets.*  
(Scott, 2004, p 462)

Nova Scotia has a vibrant arts and culture environment. Recognizing the importance of music to that environment, the province recently developed several programs to support the rapidly growing sector. *The Nova Scotia Music Sector Strategy* (Music Nova Scotia, 2007) provides a vision for the industry and identifies an agenda to develop the music sector in the province. Richard Florida and his colleagues at the Martin Prosperity Institute in Toronto are investigating the music scene’s economic and cultural contribution in Ontario (Hracs, 2009) and in the US (Florida and Jackson, 2008). Florida and Jackson (2008) note that changes in the music industry are creating the conditions within which traditional music centres may be declining in importance as musicians look for attractive locations to hone their skills and interact with other musicians. Halifax has become one such destination: an incipient music cluster. Over the last decades Halifax has become a nationally and internationally recognized music scene that attracts young musicians eager to develop their skills in a supportive community context. This natural advantage offers the city-region an opportunity that can only be nurtured with appropriate policy and investment: inaction or inappropriate policy may threaten the scene.





Metro Centre

## The Halifax Economy

Recent census results and industrial surveys indicate that creative and cultural industries have grown in importance in the Halifax economy (see Table 1; Spencer and Vinodrai, 2006, 2009). In 2001 Halifax had five industrial clusters: that is, concentrations of employment greater than the national average. These were in maritime industries, business services, ICT services, logistics, and higher education. By 2006 two new clusters had emerged: biomedical and creative/cultural industries. Employment increased over 25% in each of the biomedical and maritime clusters between 2001 and 2006, and about 15% in each of the sectors of creative/cultural, higher education, and construction. The logistics sector lost 5.7% of its jobs over the period and no longer qualified as a “cluster” by 2006.

*The artistic and cultural spaces of vibrant cities provide a seductive nightlife infrastructure to global business travelers, trade conventioners, leisure tourists, and affluent students, all of whom spend enormous sums of money in expensive restaurants, cocktail lounges, dance clubs, and other entertainment venues.* (Grazian, 2008, p. 116)

*Table 1: Location quotient of industrial sectors in Halifax in 2001 and 2006 (Spencer and Vinodrai, 2006, 2009)*

| Sector                | 2001 census | 2006 census |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Maritime              | 1.59        | 2.02        |
| ICT services          | 1.46        | 1.47        |
| Business services     | 1.49        | 1.36        |
| Higher education      | 1.75        | 1.57        |
| Logistics             | 1.20        | 1.06        |
| Biomedical            | 1.06        | 1.14        |
| Creative and cultural | 1.00        | 1.14        |

*Recent empirical research has found positive correlations between agglomerations of artists, other non-science occupations, and entrepreneurs, and economic dynamism* (Wolfe and Bramwell, 2008, p 177).

Note: The location quotient is an index of the area’s share of economic activity compared to the national share (1.0). Values over the national share indicate a concentration of economic activity in that sector in Halifax. A “cluster” is identified by several factors, including number of employees and location quotient of component industries within the sector.

Halifax has a higher proportion of its population in creative occupations than Canada as a whole, as Table 2 shows. It has more “Bohemians” (that is, artists and other creative people) than average, and a younger and better educated population than most Canadian cities. Salaries are lower than the Canadian average, and a small proportion of the population is foreign-born.

Table 2 : Comparison of selected features of Halifax to Canada in 2006  
(Spencer and Vinodrai, 2009)

| Feature                                  | Halifax  | Canada   |
|--|----------|----------|
| In creative occupations                  | 38.0%    | 33.2%    |
| Bohemians per 1000 in labour force       | 15.3     | 14.2     |
| Average full time employment income      | \$48,092 | \$51,221 |
| Foreign born                             | 7.4%     | 19.8%    |
| Unemployment rate                        | 6.3%     | 6.6%     |
| Population aged 15-64                    | 60.7%    | 55.3%    |
| Population with college degree or higher | 47.1%    | 39.8%    |

**Musician:**

*What's cool about Halifax is the focus on the artistic end of music which in the end is the most important thing. You can be a crappy band but you can't be managed to be good: you need to have good songs. I think a lot of people around here put an emphasis on song writing which is great, though we may lack a little bit of the flash, the pizzazz, and the showmanship that you see in bigger cities.*

The Greater Halifax Partnership began marketing Halifax as a “smart city” in the late 1990s and brought Richard Florida to Halifax to speak in 2004 (Halifax, 2004). In 2005 the municipality adopted a new economic strategy promoting creative cities ideas (GHP, 2005): leveraging the creative community is one of five goals in the strategy. In 2006 the city-region approved a cultural plan that suggested that culture can be a pillar for economic and community growth (Halifax, 2006, p. 4).

*The critical challenge for urban centres, regardless of size, concerns their institutional capacity to generate and sustain the knowledge-intensive activities that increasingly are the basis for innovation and growth.*  
(Wolfe and Bramwell, 2008, p. 177)



The Carleton

## The Importance of Music: Interview results

Interviews for the research project began in 2006. That year researchers asked representatives from government organizations and from associations that promoted economic, social, or cultural development a series of questions about the development context in Halifax. Although respondents pointed to some positive examples of community collaborations to generate projects like the Seaport Redevelopment (Grant et al., 2008) and the Research-in-Motion investment, many suggested that local government in Halifax proved conservative and slow to realize the potential for cultural development.

Many respondents interviewed spontaneously mentioned the role of music in Halifax's success and potential when asked general questions about economic, social, and cultural development in Halifax. For instance, a representative of a business association talked about the cachet that the 1990s band Sloan gave to Halifax. Several respondents described the significant national profile the city enjoyed when it hosted the Juno awards. Others were proud of the national success of the East Coast Music Awards broadcast on CBC television. Those who raised the topic described the Halifax music scene as vibrant, healthy, and creative.

After the unexpected interest respondents showed in the music scene in initial interviews, researchers decided to include the music industry as one of three industries profiled in the next round of interviews in 2007 focusing on the attraction and retention of talented and creative workers. The other industries investigated were health research (biomedical) and built environment consultants (business services). An unexpected but important finding of the data analysis highlighted the role of the live music scene – especially indie rock and singer/songwriters -- in attracting talented and creative young people to Halifax, and in helping to retain talented workers in the city (Grant and Kronstal, 2009). Respondents in all three sectors indicated that the Halifax music scene contributed to creating a vibrant cultural ambience with significant implications for the city-region's ability to maintain its economic performance.

### Music producer:

*Twenty years ago, you would have had to get out of Halifax – you would need to get to Toronto and try to get noticed. Strangely enough, a lot of Toronto groups and individuals come to Halifax.*

*(Q: What brings them here?)*

*It's the scene here. It's almost like a mystical thing. The music industry is always smoke-and-mirrors right? It's never what it seems. The hype has to always be greater than reality. Entertainment – P.T. Barnum would have told you that. The reality is a reality. The hype has to be more than that. Again, you have Joel Plaskett and people like that – they're making individual stuff. It's not a knock off. It's an individual voice that people have taken to.*

Respondents suggested that the vibrant night life sustained by live music performances attracted post-secondary students to the city. Saint Mary's University described Halifax as a "cool city" on its web site and reminded potential students that they likely had a Halifax band on their MP3 players (Saint Mary's University, 2009); Dalhousie University commissioned indie music for its recruitment videos (Vibert, 2009). Musicians reported that university students provided the major audience for live performances, and also furnished new generations of performers; they specifically cited NSCAD University as playing an important role in the creative context of the city, and in incubating acts like Sarah McLachlan, Sloan, and Dog Day.

#### **Music journalist:**

*Looking at the credits on a variety of albums shows the degree of collaboration that exists in Halifax. From my perspective, it is what makes this industry unique and saleable – it becomes a sales feature and part of our brand. We work it from all angles that this is a community. We are selling the community.*

#### ***Why Halifax?***

*Nestled on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, this cosmopolitan port city offers the best of two worlds - a rich history with a close connection to the sea and a vibrant, young culture. As Nova Scotia's capital, Halifax is the major centre of the Maritimes and is the largest city east of Quebec City and north of Boston. With its steep streets, stunning harbour, and the famous Citadel overlooking the city, Halifax is renowned for its beauty and character.*

#### ***Cool City***

- *Explosive music scene (you probably have a Halifax band on your MP3 player)*
- *Over 450 great restaurants*
- *Museums & galleries*
- *Pub & Club city*

Excerpt from Saint Mary's University web site (SMU, 2009)

*Maclean's Guide to Universities credited NSCAD as "a big reason Halifax is seen as one of the hippest cities in the land."*

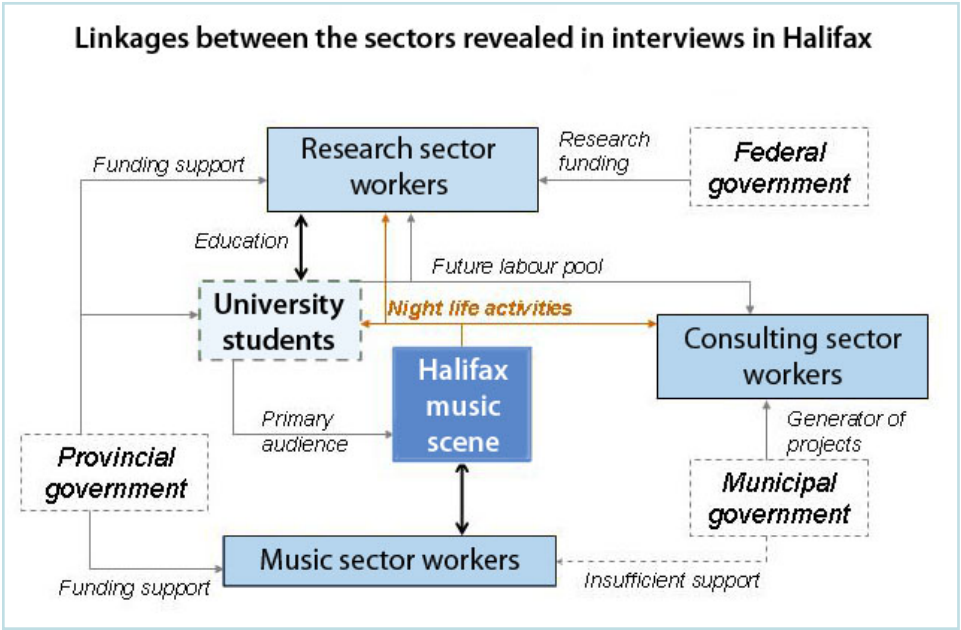
*The city's comfortable yet cosmopolitan size breeds plenty of cross-fertilization among the burgeoning indie music, art and film scenes. With reportedly more taverns and nightclubs per capita than any other Canadian city, the downtown core also boasts several dozen art galleries including the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, while many pubs and cafes also host regular art exhibitions.*

Excerpt from NSCAD University web site (NSCAD, 2009)

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships identified. Music (and the night life associated with it) helps to draw students to Halifax universities despite a context where Nova Scotia tuition fees are highest in the country. The downtown location of several of the universities facilitates ease of access for students and young researchers to music venues. Those in the health research sector indicated that the excellent students coming to Halifax universities work with them in making discoveries and sparking innovation: along with labs and funding, students constitute

essential research infrastructure. University and college graduates provide talented workers for local firms providing business and other services. Young talented and creative workers in all sectors pointed to the local music scene as an asset of the city-region that they find attractive and exciting. While the study confirmed the importance of job creation and job quality in providing opportunities for talented young people to choose to work in Halifax, it underscored the role of live music in helping to make Halifax an appealing prospect to talented and creative workers in a context where they can live and work wherever they wish. The “artistic dividend”, as Markusen and Schrock (2006) argue, clearly benefits other employment sectors.

Figure 1: Interviews revealed unexpected linkages between economic and cultural sectors (Grant and Kronstal, 2009).



**Musician:**  
*I've noticed that often people are looking for a way to categorize us in the press. Just saying "They are a Halifax band" is enough sometimes. If someone said "a Toronto band", that is not effective. But a band from Halifax – there is something interesting about that!*

**Musician:**  
*Within music I am constantly moving between classical, jazz, pop, folk, and electro-acoustic. I don't think of them as barriers but rather "food groups".*

The third season of interviews in 2008 continued to investigate the music industry and the built environment consulting sector. Researchers also met with advertising and communication design firms. Again respondents highlighted the significance of art and culture in the city-region. Music featured prominently in the attractiveness of the city for many of those interviewed in all fields.





Gus' Pub

## The Halifax Music Scene

### **Musician:**

*I find this whole myth of the Celtic very frustrating. ...Not only is it a fiction now, it is a historical fiction. It is a rewriting of history. It is problematic seeing how it writes African-Nova Scotians out of the picture; it writes German-Nova Scotians out of the picture; it writes Aboriginal people out of the picture and it largely writes Acadians out of the picture. This fictionalized Scottish / Celtic world is a minor reflection of the real Nova Scotia.*

### **Music manager:**

*No tax breaks is a problem. I have to depreciate recordings because of the tax laws. I think it's 20% the first year and 10% every year after. I spend \$60,000 to make a record: I need that to be a direct expense. Depreciating over ten years is laughable because a recording has an immediate life of maybe two years.*

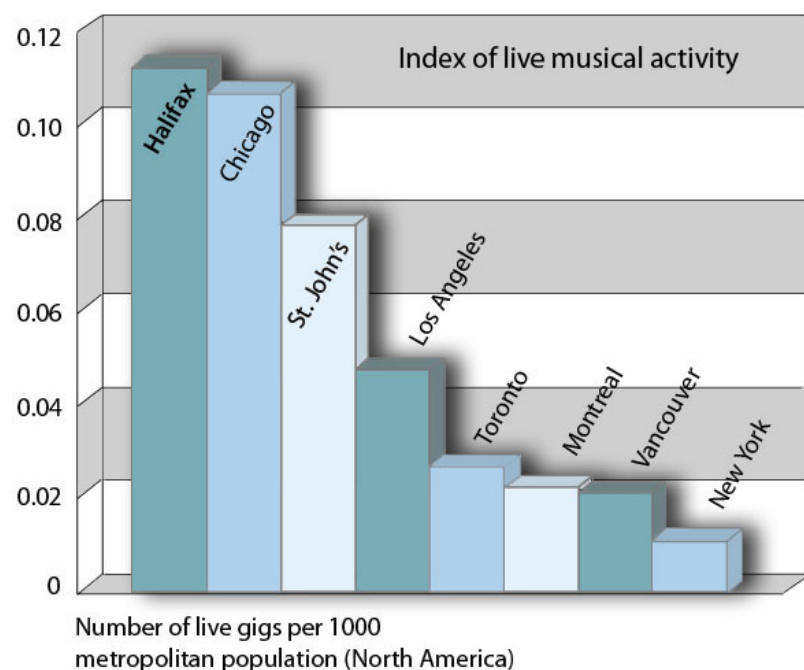
People involved in the music scene in Halifax noted that it has strengths and qualities that are unique and highly valued. The creativity and innovation of the city-region draws musicians from across the country and gives an allure to the place. Strong systems of mutual support within a highly collaborative work environment welcome newcomers in ways that musicians indicate they do not feel in other cities (Morton, 2008). Supportive local audiences give musicians positive reinforcement. Many respondents contrasted the positive nature of the music scene in Halifax with the competitive and unwelcoming atmosphere they had experienced in Toronto or Vancouver.

Those in the music sector suggested that Halifax has a distinct music scene and an authentic sound that is well known outside the region. In Halifax, musicians can cross the variety of genres operating in the city-region to be creative in ways not possible in larger cities where genres tend to be rigidly separated. Musicians have made the north end of Halifax a favoured area to live and work because of its lower costs of housing and the proximity to performance venues such as Gus' Pub and the Marquee (now the Paragon).

Changes in the music industry have transformed the business model for many musicians, as *The 2007 Nova Scotia Music Sector Strategy* notes (Music Nova Scotia, 2007). Live performance and music publishing have become more important revenue streams for musicians as CD sales have diminished. As the role of major record labels have declined, smaller centres like Halifax have become important sites of independent music creation, development, and production. Musicians can make their music anywhere, and may now look for places that inspire creativity while keeping their costs of living low. In this context, Halifax has become an attractive option. Many of the musicians interviewed pointed to the vibrant arts and culture scene in Halifax as a significant benefit of the city. Excellent provincial programs to support the development of musicians and to provide training in business skills have added to the allure of the province to musicians.

Musicians come to Halifax to hone their craft in the many live performance venues the city-region features (Haggett, 2009; Morton, 2008). Haiven (pers. comm.) notes that Halifax has more live performances per capita than cities with larger music industries (Figure 2). The tradition of live music in bars and clubs remained strong in Halifax even as nightclubs in other cities turned to DJs. Since the early 1990s Halifax has been seen as a “cool city” for independent musicians learning their trade.

*Figure 2: Halifax has a greater number of live performances by population than many other cities (Larry Haiven, personal communication)*



#### **Music promoter:**

*In Montreal they have grants up the wazoo. They even fund English stuff sometimes. In Ontario there's no provincial tax on a show. So we're at an 8 or 9 % disadvantage for every ticket we sell here.*

#### **Music festival organizer:**

*The fact that there is no volume discount on alcohol [is a problem]... In a lot of places, like Montreal, they have a volume discount for institutional buyers of alcohol. So that makes things really uncompetitive here. And the property tax structure makes it uncompetitive. In Toronto and Montreal you've got band bars that have been in business for 30 years with this great history and lineage.*

The music scene in Halifax faces some challenges. The limited number of professional managers, publishers, and agents to help musicians locally can make it hard for performers to advance their careers. The small size of the local market means that musicians must tour outside the region to reach audiences to earn a living; distance to major population centres increases the costs of touring from Halifax. The potential for gentrification in the north end threatens the affordability of a district important to artists. Frequent turnover in venues creates uncertainty for performers as well as economic crises for venue operators (Haggett, 2009). Several respondents spoke of issues regarding the use of municipally-owned facilities like the Khyber, the Pavilion, and the Bloomfield Centre. Respondents worried that the closure and redevelopment of the Marquee may limit opportunities for acts that draw audiences of more than 200 but fewer than a thousand to play in Halifax and may affect the touring and residence plans of some bands. Musicians and others involved in the music business commonly pointed to tax disincentives and policies that limit

the music industry in the province and in the city. Some respondents criticized HRM for giving large donations and public spaces over to international rock bands while hesitating to support festivals that encourage local artists or charging excessive fees to promoters to use municipal streets, parks, and police services. Barrieau (2004) noted that those successful at “exporting” their wares from the region often have to leave because the infrastructure for sustaining careers is more advanced in larger music centres. For instance, Halifax lost Sarah McLachlan, an internationally respected musician, to Vancouver. The band Sloan made Halifax famous before moving to Toronto. While many excellent musicians choose to remain in Halifax, others find themselves pulled to Toronto, New York, Vancouver, or Montreal to pursue their careers.

**Music intermediary:**

*I think the lack of a municipal strategy means that we do not have the venues and facilities that we should have.*



*Figure 3: Main performance venues in central Halifax highlighted in red*





Dalhousie Arts Centre

## Supporting the Music Scene: Policy implications

The diversity, vitality, and socially supportive character of the Halifax music scene offers the city-region a comparative advantage in the Canadian urban system in attracting and retaining young and talented workers and the firms that employ them. Local government has yet to act to evaluate and develop that competitive advantage. Supporting the music scene in Halifax can help the city-region to continue to incubate and encourage innovation in music creation and production while boosting Halifax's national and international profile as a cultural centre.

Several cities have made music the basis for economic and cultural development. Beginning in the 1980s, Austin, Texas, pursued a strategy to develop its rock and roll music scene (Shank, 1994): its internationally respected music festival, South by Southwest (SXSW), draws tens of thousands of visitors annually. Branding itself as “Live Music Capital of the World” (Austin, 2009), the city and its Music Commission arranges music performances at city council meetings, features live bands at the airport, and facilitates permits for outdoor performances. In 2008, the mayor of Seattle, Washington – birthplace of Bing Crosby and Kurt Cobain – launched a plan calling Seattle the “City of Music”, with the idea of making music a centrepiece of regional economic development (Seattle, 2009). Nashville, Tennessee – “Music City” -- has an important tourism industry based around country music. Florida and Jackson (2008) suggest that Nashville's music industry has the potential to rival New York and Los Angeles over the next few years as the industry continues to transform. Music contributes \$6.38 billion to the Nashville economy annually (Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, 2006).

In the UK in the 1990s, communities like Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield, and Consett based regeneration strategies around music and music tourism (Brown et al, 2000; Hudson, 1995). The summer 2009 issue of *CAA Magazine* featured stories on six “cities of song”: Austin, Halifax, Montreal, Nashville, New York, and Toronto. Music tourism has become central to the economy of many communities with strong musical traditions or a legacy of producing famous acts (Connell and Gibson, 2003; Gibson, 2002).

*Now more than ever, economic development strategies must be oriented towards individuals – or human capital. Simply put, economic development strategies need a more human dimension. Communities and governments should not only invest in traditional infrastructure, but also in creating an environment that is appealing to creative and talented workers.*

(Barrieau and Savoie, 2006, p 64)

*Increasing analytical attention is focused on cities' capacities to formulate responses to their own particular set of challenges. Relatively few cities enjoy the same endowments as Paris, New York, or London, but each has its own institutional assets and capacity for the development of its local economy.*

(Wolfe and Bramwell, 2008, p 180)

## ***Liverpool Rocks***

*Liverpool's status as the cultural home of British music was secured with four local mop-tops in the early 1960s and there's little chance of locals relinquishing its title. ...*

## ***The Beat Goes on!***

*60 years of Liverpool music celebrated in new exhibition*

*From The Beatles to The Zutons, Liverpool is a city buzzing with musical talent. This summer, the city that The Guinness Book of Records has named as World Capital City of Pop is host to an exciting exhibition dedicated to 60 years of Liverpool music.*

<http://www.visitliverpool.com/site/experiences/liverpool-rocks>

*"Do you think it's fate that brought me to this stage?" [nationally renowned singer/songwriter Jill Barber asks as she performs at the Rebecca Cohn in Halifax] ... [I]n her preamble she recognizes that luck is just part of an equation that also includes a strong community that believes in sharing and supporting music.*  
(Cooke, 2008, p C14)

### **Music promoter:**

*The legislation on all-age shows should be something that needs to be seriously looked at. You cannot have a 16 year old in a bar or a room where there is liquor on the shelf. I just think it is slightly absurd. At the end of the day, who are we really hurting? Why are we restricting these youths from quality entertainment?*

Markusen and Schrock (2006) argue that art and music can be the basis of a viable development strategy. Musicians help to make places lovable and keep residents loyal. Artists like to cluster in lower cost, amenity rich locations with good apprenticeship or learning opportunities. Governments that want to attract and retain artists can support artists' organizations and education, and improve arts facilities and infrastructure. They need to be concerned, however, about low wages in the sector, the cost of living, and the availability of amenities: rising housing prices and threats to the range of music performance venues may threaten the long term viability of a music scene. Zukin (1982) described how gentrification drove artists out of creative districts in places like SoHo decades ago. Currid (2007) noted recently that artists in New York are fleeing for Brooklyn and New Jersey because housing and production space has become unreasonably expensive in the city. New York is in danger of losing its creative clusters. Manchester, England's, policy to promote property-led regeneration in its urban core threatened the viability of its cultural quarter (Brown et al, 2000). Similar trends are happening in Toronto (Hracs, forthcoming) and Vancouver, with musicians driven to the suburbs of large cities because the costs of living downtown are increasingly prohibitive.

Governments that hope to support and nurture cultural sectors need to act carefully and responsibly. Inappropriate interventions can quickly undermine conditions. In evaluating the problems that Manchester encountered in its cultural quarter, Brown et al (2000) suggest that government may begin by removing the barriers that restrict cultural activities and industries. In the music sector, for instance, some of these may relate to liquor licensing issues, to taxation policies, and to public facility use. Government also may evaluate public services like transportation to consider their effects: for instance, late bus service may improve the viability of performances. Working with those involved in the arts and culture sector to identify issues and strategies may help to develop policies and practices appropriate for Halifax.

To take advantage of its opportunity, and to prevent the risks that can face creative cities that do not protect their cultural communities, Halifax needs to act appropriately and in a timely manner. The *Cultural Plan* provides a good starting point but it requires additional implementation mechanisms and funding investments to support creative clusters (Morton, 2008).

**In order to develop an appropriate policy environment to support, retain, and nurture the music scene the municipality may find it most effective to work with music sector groups like Music Nova Scotia, the East Coast Music Association, and community members to develop a Halifax music strategy and plan for action.**

Some possible local government actions to support the music scene:

- Establish a music commission or task force
- Develop music incubation facilities
- Provide business education and professional development for music industry
- Build live / work spaces for artists
- Create arts districts or music cluster districts
- Support festivals that promote the local music scene and local performers
- Make public spaces and facilities freely available for music performances
- Brand the city as a music scene
- Feature the music scene in promoting the city
- Develop a music directory on the city website
- Enhance music education programs in schools
- Create a music sector strategy or plan
- Develop funding programs to invest in the music sector
- Provide opportunities for all-ages venues
- Enhance, expand, and support local performance venues
- Develop strategy to prevent displacement of artists
- Facilitate music cooperatives

#### **Music manager:**

*Certainly speaking of this local music industry, it wouldn't exist without a great deal of collaboration between businesses that otherwise – in fact, in a great number of other places – would probably be seen as a competitor. This is one of the most cooperative music scenes that I've certainly ever seen and I've been around most of them. You have to cooperate: it's too small – everything is too small. Out here I don't really see anyone trying to claw themselves ahead at the expense of others. ... Strangely enough, in spite of everything, this part of the country is almost bordering on one of those places that you would want to go to – perversely because of the cooperation between artists. This town is hugely supportive. It's no surprise that Jill Barber, who is from Kingston for god's sakes, launched her career here. You can get a lot of attention out of this market. There are a lot of really good industry people here. The CBC is probably more into the music side of things in this city than they are in any other city that I can think of. They help and they foster those artists.*

Hamilton et al (2009) describe a range of policy initiatives in Canadian and international contexts. Local government investment programs can create cultural districts and facilities to serve as incubators for talent development and performance. Some cities have adopted zoning policies, property tax incentives, and facility use policies designed to support their arts and culture scenes. While

current economic development policy in Halifax acknowledges the importance of the cultural sector, it does not fully implement programs and projects to advance the interests of the city-region: it significantly underestimates the potential that music offers. Creativity can be a generator of prosperity and identity that governments need to support and develop.

Halifax has several musical genres that enjoy international respect. Its music scene is diverse and permeable so that many musicians move easily across and between genres. Nova Scotia tourism authorities have traditionally focussed on the Celtic genre. In terms of attracting students and young workers to the city-region, however, the indie rock, singer/songwriter, pop, and hip hop scenes may be equally or more significant. Halifax also has highly respected gospel, jazz, blues, folk, and classical genres that interest a range of tourists and visitors. Alternative sounds continue to emerge from the enormously creative NSCAD University scene and provide important opportunities for innovation and experimentation. Halifax has something for every taste – for residents, students, and visitors alike. Musicians love Halifax because of the incredibly supportive audiences they find in the city: Nova Scotia offers a cultural context that embraces and celebrates music and musicians. The same cannot be said of many other parts of the country.

The business infrastructure of the music industry is small in Halifax, but it offers a strong foundation from which to build. Media in the city (such as CBC radio and TV, CKDU radio, the *Chronicle-Herald*, and *The Coast* magazine) give the music scene good coverage. A range of festivals such as the Halifax Pop Explosion, the Atlantic Jazz Festival, the Atlantic International Film Festival, and the Nova Scotia Tattoo give performers opportunities to test their wares. The Nova Scotia Community College has initiated courses and certificate programs to train music technicians and to offer business skills to those trying to manage their own careers. Additional facilities (like incubation spaces or live/work spaces) and infrastructural supports (such as training programs for managers and agents) could help the sector to develop and grow.

Municipal government can create a positive environment for cultural development, and can choose its brand in the contemporary cultural economy. However, it needs the cooperation and assistance of higher levels of government with the power and resources to achieve a positive environment for creative industries. Halifax may need to lobby the province for taxing and pricing policies that enhance the viability of the music scene; for instance, policies around alcohol pricing and the age of audience members affect the economic viability of venues and the ability of youth to hear live acts or to make music themselves in front of audiences. The city-region may wish to lobby the federal government to restore funding for touring support for artists (Fortin, 2008); the loss of this assistance can undermine export potential despite the province's desire to enhance the export potential of cultural industries (Nova Scotia, 2007)

*Communities and regions, like companies, need to innovate and adapt to remain competitive.*  
(Gertler and Wolfe, 2004, p. 46)

*This growing conflict between property development and the cultural sector threatens to be damaging to the NQ [Northern Quarter cultural district in Manchester] and to the city as a whole. ...these developments indicate that whilst a local authority cannot conjure up an industry out of nothing, it can let it disappear through failing to support it.*  
(Brown et al, 2000, p.449)

*Music Nova Scotia is confident that branding is the way to enhance the marketability of Nova Scotia cultural product in the international market.*  
(Nova Scotia, 2007, p 18)





The Pavilion

## The Advantage of Music

Halifax enjoys a distinct comparative advantage in the attractiveness of its independent music scene to musicians, residents, students, and visitors. The strong sense of community and mutual support within the music scene, and the positive reinforcement offered by the larger Halifax community, attracts musicians from across the country. This social dynamic is rare, and proves a stark contrast to the highly competitive atmosphere in Toronto and Vancouver. Halifax is seen as a creative cultural centre for incubating great musical talent: that promise, along with the nature of the urban environment and the lively arts and culture community, draws musicians to the city-region. Music performances entertain visitors to the city, adding to the tourist experience. The vibrant live music scene serves as a magnet attracting students to the universities and colleges of the city-region; the universities and colleges then provide major sources of talented and creative workers for diverse sectors of the regional economy. In an era where city-regions need to attract and retain talented and creative workers, identifying and sustaining the sources of their competitive advantage is essential to long term success. The arts and culture sector -- and the music scene in particular -- gives Halifax an advantage that many mid-sized Canadian cities do not enjoy. Such cultural clusters cannot be created by public policy (Wolfe and Gertler, 2004), although many cities hope to generate them.

*Nova Scotia and its municipalities, particularly HRM, must embed culture and creativity as core principles of their economic and community development policies.*

(Hamilton et al 2009, p iv)

Cultural scenes are by their nature vulnerable and precarious. Cultural workers are mobile and adaptable; too often they earn low salaries and are forced to find other sources of livelihood that limit their cultural productivity. City-regions that hope to retain and support their cultural scenes need to act judiciously to identify appropriate policies and strategies to meet the needs of cultural sector workers and to create improved working conditions that promote continuing innovation and social learning. By engaging with the music and cultural communities to develop a music sector strategy that aims to create positive conditions to nurture the independent music scene in the city, local development authorities can help promote the long-term economic, social, and cultural development of the city-region as a whole.

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