

Workforce and Labour Market Impact – Music Industry Arts Program, Algonquin College

The Ottawa Music Industry Coalition (OMIC) is pleased to provide the following workforce impact analysis in response to the City of Ottawa's request for partner feedback regarding Algonquin College's proposed program cuts. This submission focuses on the Music Industry Arts program as a foundational workforce pipeline that sits at the ground level of delivering the City's Nightlife Economy Action Plan, Downtown Revitalization initiatives, Festival Strategy, and broader cultural and tourism investments.

Ottawa's position as a midsize market creates both opportunity and vulnerability. Unlike larger centres such as Toronto and Montréal, Ottawa must work harder to retain skilled early-career talent. Without strong, local training pathways, workers are more likely to leave the region, weakening the City's capacity to deliver festivals, events, nightlife, and public-space activation at the scale and quality these strategies envision. To fully realize the return on the City's current and planned investments, solutions must be identified to maintain and strengthen this local workforce pipeline rather than dismantle it at a moment of demonstrated demand and growth.

Statistics & Economic Impact

Program performance and labour market alignment

The Music Industry Arts program demonstrates strong alignment with labour market demand when compared to typical postsecondary benchmarks:

- **Employment rate:** According to Algonquin College stats, 92.3% of graduates are employed in the field, indicating rapid absorption into the workforce.
- **Graduation rate:** 82.6%, reflecting strong student retention and program completion.
- **Longevity:** 16 consecutive years of operation with consistent demand and industry relevance. Anywhere from 100 to 400 students have applied annually since 2010.
- Enrolment performance since 2020:
 - Target registration total: 452 students
 - Actual registration total: 496 students
 - Result: 109% of enrolment targets achieved, including during pandemic years.
- Pandemic resilience:



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- During 2020 and 2021, when delivery shifted online, the program retained more than 70 students per year, demonstrating sustained demand even under constrained conditions.
- Forward demand signal:
 - As of February 2026, over 100 applications have been submitted for Fall 2026.
 - 18 confirmed students were already registered, tracking ahead of the same period last year.

Key implication: This is not a declining or underperforming program. It is operating at or above capacity with strong forward momentum.

Workforce pipeline contribution to Ottawa's economy

Graduates of the Music Industry Arts program feed directly into Ottawa's live events, festivals, venues, touring, broadcasting, and cultural production workforce. These sectors are labour-intensive and skills-specific, with limited capacity to substitute untrained labour.

Based on employer feedback:

- Graduates fill entry- to mid-level roles that are difficult to recruit locally without this pipeline.
- Employers rely on a steady annual intake of job-ready workers rather than sporadic or informal training pathways.
- Many production companies report that a majority of their technical staff are program graduates, particularly in audio, lighting, AV systems, and production coordination roles.
 - Over the last 10 years, 73% of OSE staff have come directly from this program
 - Major players like IATSE, Encore and Lycea Productions rely heavily on graduates to staff production at festivals, events, and conferences

These roles directly support:

- Festivals and major events
- Municipal and civic programming
- Downtown activation and tourism-driven cultural activity
- Conference, broadcast, and hybrid event production

Key implication: Without this pipeline, employers face higher costs, reduced capacity, and increased reliance on out-of-town labour.

Revenue and institutional efficiency considerations

The program also performs strongly from a financial and institutional perspective:

- The Music Industry Arts program runs on a three-semester schedule.
- This structure generates approximately 50 percent more annual tuition revenue per student compared to standard two-semester programs.

Key implication: The program is not only workforce-aligned, it is comparatively revenue-efficient within the college's program mix.

Economic spillover and municipal risk

[OMIC's open letter to the Algonquin Board of Governors](#) highlights the broader economic context in which this workforce operates

- Canada's live music and related sectors generate \$10.92 billion in GDP nationally.
- The sector supports more than 101,000 jobs and generates \$3.7 billion in tax revenue.
- Ottawa's share of this activity is concentrated in festivals, venues, live events, and tourism-linked programming.

At the municipal level, the loss of a local training pipeline creates concrete risks:

- Increased operating costs for City-supported events and facilities due to higher labour rates and external sourcing.
- Reduced capacity to scale or add programming during peak tourism and festival seasons.
- Talent leakage to Toronto and Montréal further weakens Ottawa's mid-career workforce over time.
- Long-term erosion of Ottawa's ability to deliver concurrent major events, which depend on experienced technical crews.

Equity, access, and workforce sustainability

Applied programs like Music Industry Arts also serve an equity function:

- They provide a clear, local entry point into stable, skills-based employment.
- They reduce reliance on unpaid internships or informal networks.



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- They support socio-economic mobility in a sector that is otherwise difficult to access.

Eliminating such programs narrows the workforce funnel and concentrates opportunity among those who can afford to relocate or self-finance training elsewhere.

Summary

The data demonstrate that the Music Industry Arts program:

- Exceeds enrolment targets and shows strong forward demand.
- Produces graduates with high employment outcomes.
- Generates above-average tuition revenue efficiency.
- Supplies a workforce that underpins Ottawa's fast-growing events, tourism, and cultural economy.
- Reduces recruitment costs and operational risk for employers, including municipal partners.

From a workforce and economic development perspective, the proposed termination represents a high-risk intervention into a functioning, high-demand labour pipeline with long-term consequences that would be difficult and costly to reverse.

OMIC would welcome the opportunity to be an active partner in exploring meaningful ways to collaborate. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like to discuss next steps.

Sincerely,

Melanie Brulée, Executive Director
Ottawa Music Industry Coalition / Coalition de l'industrie musicale d'Ottawa
ottawamic.com
melanie@ottawamic.com