



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 26-090**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services
Resource Staff: Danika Lochhead, Director, Arts & Culture Services
Date of Meeting: March 24, 2026
Subject: Update: Community Celebrations of The Tragically Hip Final Concert 10 Year Anniversary

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 5. Drive Inclusive Economic Growth

Goal: 5.7 Foster culture, history, education, arts and recreation (CHEAR).

Executive Summary:

This report is to provide an update on City and partner plans to bring community together to commemorate and celebrate the upcoming anniversary of The Tragically Hip's final concert that took place on August 20, 2016 in their hometown of Kingston. The concert was a milestone for the Kingston community and plans are underway to celebrate local arts, culture and music through community events, concerts, exhibits, programs and more. Formed in Kingston in 1984, The Tragically Hip are an essential part of Kingston's cultural identity, with a legacy that is inseparable from the place they have long called home.

At Council's meeting on February 3rd, staff brought a report ([Report Number 26-046](#)) requesting funding of up to \$350,000 from the Working Fund Reserve to support advance planning happening between the City and partners and in consultation with The Tragically Hip band management to support a series of community focused opportunities to celebrate this anniversary. The request at that time was an "up to" amount to allow flexibility in responding to various program opportunities, while seeking additional grant and sponsorship dollars, and in consideration of the costs incurred around the activations in Springer Market Square in 2016 when the City streamed the final concert. In 2016, that steaming event alone was supported with \$150,000 from the Working Fund Reserve. The February 3rd report was deferred by Council and

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staff were requested to return with additional information regarding planned City events and activations related to the 2026 anniversary celebrations of the final concert of The Tragically Hip to Council no later than the March 24, 2026, Council meeting.

Staff recognize that the previous “up to” request for funding alongside of not yet being able to share many details around City-and partner-led programming and/or any national and band-related programming details created uncertainty around the fund use and value to the local community. Since the February 3rd report staff have worked to confirm as many plans as possible that can now be shared publicly, firmed up additional funding sources and have worked to modify and re-scale plans to reduce any new budget considerations to the City. Staff have continued to align programming more directly to existing operating budget program lines, especially in Heritage Services and Arts & Culture Services to ensure that anniversary-related programming amplifies and expands on free and accessible City programs which are already within approved budgets.

Tourism Kingston has also supported the approval of up to \$100,000 funding contribution from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Development Fund to enhance other events and community programming, especially those occurring on or around the ten-year anniversary date, which is August 20, 2026. This additional contribution may be reduced if partners are successful in securing grants, but this confirmation of funding enables staff to continue with advance planning on programming opportunities that must continue to remain confidential at this time. Staff have also confirmed \$23,500 in sponsorship dollars to support City programming and will continue to pursue additional opportunities to offset costs.

With the work undertaken over the last month to confirm plans and pricing, secure outside funding sources and rescale programming, this report does not include any request for additional funding from the Working Fund Reserve. All City led programming is now funded within existing approved budgets, through outside funding sources like the MAT or through sponsorship contributions. Staff are requesting Council’s support to advance required partnership agreements and to waive fees for City venues, parks and public spaces where appropriate.

Recommendation:

That Council delegate authority to the Director of Arts & Culture Services to approve any necessary agreements to support the tenth anniversary of The Tragically Hip’s final concert in Kingston with programming, events and activations; and

That Council delegate authority to the Director of Arts & Culture Services to approve the waiving of any applicable fees through City of Kingston By-Law Number 2026-7, Fees & Charges By-Law 2026, including rental fees for City venues and/or parks and public spaces and to support in-kind services and contributions to support events, programming and activations directly related to the City and partner-led community celebrations of the final concert of The Tragically Hip; and

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That staff report back to Council at its meeting on June 16, 2026 to provide an update on final programming plans supported by the City and partners that will provide opportunities for the community to come together to celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the final concert of The Tragically Hip.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

Jennifer Campbell,
Commissioner, Community
Services

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	
Jenna Morley, City Solicitor	Not required
Ian Semple, Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services	Not required

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Options/Discussion:**Background**

2026 marks the tenth anniversary of The Tragically Hip's final concert that was held in the band's hometown of Kingston on August 20, 2016 at the Rogers K-Rock Centre, as it was then named. That historic concert was part of their Man Machine Poem Tour which was broadcast live by CBC and watched live in Springer Market Square by more than 25,000 people and by more than 11.7 million Canadians across the country and became a defining cultural moment for Kingston.

To enable this large-scale community gathering in 2016, Council approved a motion at its meeting on July 12, 2016, directing staff to coordinate the necessary visual and sound production to support the live feed downtown and approved a budget of \$150,000 through the Working Fund Reserve.

Through various investments from Council over the years in support of one-time, significant community, cultural and economic initiatives, there have been strong economic returns for the community, including approximately \$2.7 million in economic activity for The Tragically Hip's final concert in 2016 based on a City investment of \$150,000 and approximately \$3.3 million in economic activity for The Tim Hortons Brier in 2020 based on a City investment of \$200,000.

Kingston City Council also approved the Kingston Music Strategy in 2024 and Tourism Kingston's Integrated Destination Strategy 3.0, both which aim to position Kingston as a music city. This work to recognize the anniversary of The Tragically Hip's final concert, deliver music programming for residents of Kingston, and leverage the opportunity for tourism spend and increased economic activity is aligned with approved City and tourism strategies.

Analysis

With expectations of renewed attention on Kingston during this milestone year, the City, partners and the band's management are preparing opportunities for residents and visitors to engage, reflect and celebrate music in Kingston and the band's profound impact on music and culture globally.

Cultural programming that has been confirmed and can be shared at this time includes:

- A free, major music exhibition in the Market Wing Cultural Space in City Hall, opening in June 2026. Curated by Heritage Services, this exhibition will celebrate Kingston's rich musical legacy from the pre-1800s through to today, featuring a broad exploration of pivotal artists, venues and cultural moments. It will also include an interactive Jam Space in partnership with Joe's Music Mill, highlights of Kingston's contemporary music scene supported by the Kingston Music Office, and a dedicated section celebrating The Tragically Hip for their foundational influence locally and nationally, and their impactful final concert in Kingston. Staff are working with The Tragically Hip to include objects, artifacts, archival material and memorabilia relating to the band.

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- A free City of Kingston *Rockin' the Square* concert, presented by Arts & Culture Services, in Springer Market Square on August 20, 2026, which is the date that will mark 10 years since the final concert of The Tragically Hip. *Rockin' the Square* will feature a nationally touring band, the music of The Tragically Hip and will include local artists/bands as the opener. The artists will be announced in June.
- A special event happening in downtown Kingston on the weekend of August 22, 2026, with details to be released in May.
- The creation and installation of a mural and public art installations in downtown Kingston, featuring the work of local visual artists and imagery of The Tragically Hip.
- A three-week run at Kingston Grand Theatre of a brand-new Canadian musical, *It's a Good Life If You Don't Weaken*, featuring songs from the iconic catalogue of The Tragically Hip, presented by the Thousand Islands Playhouse and produced in partnership with David and Hannah Mirvish, and Michael Rubinoff, the originating producer of the most successful Canadian musical in history, *Come From Away*. Announced on [March 19 by the Playhouse](#), [tickets](#) go on sale to the public on March 31st.

Staff will return to Council at its meeting on June 16, 2026, to provide additional programming updates as they become available.

Tourism Kingston has also launched a [webpage](#) dedicated to The Tragically Hip which will serve as a hub for stories, screenings, and public events and experiences in Kingston, with more to be added as anniversary programming and initiatives develop.

Financial Considerations

This report does not include any additional municipal funding requests from the Working Fund Reserve. The financial considerations in this report are through anticipated in-kind City contributions to the new musical, produced by the non-profit theatre company, Thousand Islands Playhouse, that will run at Kingston Grand Theatre. Pending Council approval, the total in-kind contribution is approximately \$20,000 for venue rental of the Regina Rosen Auditorium. The City expects to generate revenue from this three-week run of up to \$134,000 in ticket fees and \$63,000 through bar revenues. The revenue to the City from this production is expected to be 50% higher than what would normally be realized during this time period, as this type and scale of show and length of run is unique to Kingston Grand Theatre, and is expected to have broader economic and tourism impact on the City.

Contacts:

Danika Lochhead, Director, Arts & Culture Services, 613-546-4291 extension 1277

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

None

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Exhibits Attached:

None