Chairperson  
Community Services Committee  
City of Hamilton

Dear Councillor Jackson,  

September 14, 2006

I would like to request the opportunity to make a presentation at the next meeting of the Community Services Committee for the City of Hamilton. The presentation would focus on a request to reconsider funding support from the City of Hamilton for SportHamilton, based on additional and new information.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

You may recall that on November 22, 2005, I made a presentation to City Council, requesting $25,000 for financial support for administrative staff for SportHamilton. Council gave strong support to my request at that meeting; however, during later budget deliberations, the SportHamilton request was part of a long list of enhancements to the City budget, all of which were cut.

The current Hamilton Sport Council, now called SportHamilton, is a vibrant group of 18 Board of Directors. The Directors are active leaders in a variety of programs and events which reflect our mandate of “Sport For All”. Although the Hamilton Sport Council was formed in the late 1980's, the original organization operated only as an Advisory Committee to the City of Hamilton.

SUCCESS WITH GRANTS

Since 2000, SportHamilton has become an active community outreach group, working closely with the City of Hamilton staff to lead in the development of quality sport programs in Hamilton. Our not for profit status has allowed us to access grants which develop new programs and/or enhance existing ones – grants for which the City is ineligible. In the past five years, SportHamilton has successfully applied for and received almost $300,000 in grants including but not limited to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canadian Heritage, the Ontario Government Communities In Action Fund, and True Sport. The grants have enhanced the delivery of the Hamilton Sport Volunteer Dinner and expanded the Breakfast of Champions event. Two grants have provided free Outdoor and Indoor Soccer programs for disadvantaged youth in Hamilton who face cultural and economic barriers to accessing recreation and sport. SportHamilton has also organized several complimentary workshops for local sport coaches and volunteers including Volunteer Screening, National Coaching Certification, Accessing Trillium Grants, Communicating with Athletes and Increasing Opportunities for Physical Activity for Girls and Women.
A recent grant of $38,000 from Heritage Canada provided SportHamilton with the opportunity to play a leadership role in conducting a major research project. The study identified barriers which prevent Hamilton youth from participating in recreation and sport and provided recommendations and strategies to address these barriers. We continue to work closely with Culture and Recreation and other community organizations including the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club to implement these recommendations and strategies.

In June 2006, SportHamilton was approached by the City of Hamilton to form a partnership for the purpose of applying to the Ministry of Health Promotion for a $30,000 Communities In Action Fund. The grant proposed the implementation of the Hamilton Recreation Roundtable. This Pilot project would target 15 underserved cultural, linguistic, disabled and youth markets within the City of Hamilton. The City was required to partner with a not-for-profit community organization to meet the eligibility requirements for accessing the grant. The City also selected SportHamilton because of our role in the recent Recreation Access Project, the expertise of our organization in working with over 300 local sport organizations, the availability of our staff manager to provide administrative support and the volunteer time of our Board members to assist with the Roundtable. The “Cultural Roundtable” has received the $30,000 grant and SportHamilton looks forward to working with the City on this project.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

To reach our goal of financial sustainability, SportHamilton has formed partnerships with several local, provincial and national organizations and businesses including but not limited to The Hamilton Spectator, Pearson Dunn Insurance, Stirling Printall, the Hamilton Bulldogs, the Hamilton Ticats, Investors Group, the YWCA and YMCA, the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club, CAAWS (Canadian Association For the Advancement of Women in Sport) the Sport Alliance of Ontario, the Ontario Coaching Association and Softball Ontario. Our Board of Directors and manager have been active in fundraising efforts such as seeking donations and operating the 50-50 draw at the annual Labour Day Ticat game. In the past five years SportHamilton has earned over $75,000 through fundraising projects.

A new initiative commencing in 2006 for our organization is the hosting of two different sport events in Hamilton each year. The purpose of these events, in addition to creating a new revenue source for SportHamilton, is to provide new opportunities for Hamilton youth, to showcase Hamilton and its facilities and athletes and to impact the Sport Tourism dollars for Hamilton. Our Board of Directors have the expertise and connections for hosting these events. In August 2006 SportHamilton hosted a provincial house league Girls Softball Tournament for 11-13 year old players at Turner Park. In April 2007, we plan to host Elite Ontario - a girls gymnastics competition for over 300 athletes - at the Morgan Firestone Arena.
CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SportHamilton has become one of the leading sport councils in Ontario – leading in our city and leading in the province. In 2003 we were recognized by the Ontario Sport Alliance as the Outstanding Sport Council of the Year. Several newly formed Sport Councils have approached us for advice. One of our Executive members, Kellie Hinnells, has recently been elected by all Ontario Sport Councils to represent them on the Board of Directors of the Ontario Sport Alliance.

During the past five years, SportHamilton has worked closely with city staff responsible for Sport Development to strengthen the community outreach in Hamilton in the area of recreation and sport. This partnership has enhanced and expanded established and new programs. SportHamilton’s ability to leverage funds not available to the City combined with a committed group of individuals bringing hundreds of volunteer hours is added value to the Hamilton community. Members of the Board of Directors of SportHamilton are dedicated and experienced sport volunteers from a variety of backgrounds. They include Olympians, Health Professionals, University and College faculty and staff and numerous Past Presidents of local sport organizations. Several of our members have been honoured by the City of Hamilton for a variety of recognition awards including Ray Johnson, Paula Schnurr, Kelly Dunham, Kellie Hinnells and myself. Our Executive Committee contributes over 300 volunteer hours a year and when coupled with another approximately 650 hours from our other 13 Board members, this total is close to one thousand volunteer hours per year.

STAFFING HISTORY

In 2001, after engaging in a Strategic Planning exercise, the Board of SportHamilton decided to utilize the newly acquired funds from the Trillium grant to hire a part time staff person. The position was to assist with operating our current programs and to seek out additional funding through grants and other funding sources. At that time, we made a decision to share with CANUSA Games the services of this position. We operated in this partnership until September 2004 at which time the individual in that position accepted a new position at the Quad Pad. The SportHamilton Board of Directors took this opportunity to discuss investing in a full time employee with a major focus on accessing new funding. We recognized that the Trillium Grant was a one time source and we were concerned about financial sustainability for our organization. After careful deliberation we made a decision to hire a full time staff position and in February 2005, Alana Henderson was hired as the manager of SportHamilton.

Although SportHamilton’s Board of Directors is active and we have had good success in fundraising and accessing grants, the majority of these grants do not permit any of the funds to be utilized for paid staffing costs. In January 2006, after reviewing our financial situation, we made a decision to approach CANUSA to once again share a staff position. We worked out an agreement on a trial basis for a year with a review after six months and have operated in this manner since the second week of February, 2006. As you know, the CANUSA Games will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary in 2007. They have recently
notified us that they will require a full time staff member to carry out the responsibilities with the 2007 event and are therefore unable to continue with our present agreement.

IMPACT

SportHamilton does appreciate the current cooperation and recognition which we receive from the City through the allocation of office space and technology/communications services. We want to continue with our mandate of Sport for All and providing quality sport programs in Hamilton. We recognize that we need a paid administrator to assist with administering our programs and fundraising. However, at this time with our current financial situation we are only able to support a part time staff member for two more months. To enable us to continue to operate we are requesting $25,000 annually from the City of Hamilton to assist with staffing costs. Without this support, we cannot survive. The programs we have initiated will cease to exist and the City’s established programs and events we support may continue but will be impacted by the absence of our grants and volunteer support. If this request for financial support is denied, the recently approved CIAF grant for $38,000 will be in jeopardy. The grant was awarded based on the City’s partnership with SportHamilton as a not for profit organization and the terms of the partnership included a value-in-kind contribution of our staff person’s time. We may also have to return a recent True Sport grant awarded to the City in a partnership with SportHamilton. This grant supports a program to introduce Ice Hockey to teenage girls. In our opinion, it will be a loss for the community if SportHamilton ceases to exist.

CONCLUSION

SportHamilton trusts that you will give serious consideration to our request for $25,000 annually for staff support. We urge you to review the return investment for the City of Hamilton - 1000 annual volunteer hours to assist the staff member responsible for Sport Development in the city and the benefits of the $300,000 accessed in grants not otherwise available to the city plus our fundraising record of over $75,000 in the past five years. We ask you to reflect on the very significant role that SportHamilton has played in the City’s strategic priority of enhancing the well-being of our community. The Director of the Culture and Recreation Division is fully supportive of our programs and of this request for financial support.

Thank you for taking the time to review this request. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the role SportHamilton has played in the community and the future of the organization at your next meeting.

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