

CLC / CNMN / JFC Joint Press Release: Specialized Music Recording Cuts

20 October 2009

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage Holds Hearings on Cuts to Musical Diversity Program: CLC, CNMN, and JFC Ask Heritage Canada to Follow Its Own Recommendations!

The Canadian League of Composers (CLC), Canadian New Music Network (CNMN), and Jazz Festivals Canada (JFC) are united in their opposition to Heritage Canada's withdrawal of Canada Music Fund money from The Canada Council for the Arts' Specialized Music Recording Program.

For twenty years, this program has delivered essential support to non-commercial Canadian music. It has also given a head start to a rich diversity of talented musicians - artists such as Diana Krall, and entire genres such as Celtic music, to name but a few. This is music which speaks to Canadians, and raises the profile of Canadian music around the world. It also plays an essential role in the health of Canada's musical ecosystem. The same artists who produce the commercial music of which Canada is so justly proud also rely on a diversity of non-commercial music to maintain their creative powers, using it as a laboratory, an incubator of fresh artistic ideas and expression.

For this reason, taking away support for non-commercial recording harms not only whole genres such as classical, contemporary, musique actuelle, jazz, improv, world music, folk, and roots music. It hurts the commercial industry as well. The two are not separate. Creative music making - in any genre - does not come out of the board rooms of music corporations. This short-term decision will, in the longer term, damage the entire Canadian music industry.

Music making is not just about record sales or downloads. The music industry understands this. The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (who run the Juno awards) has a very active music education program (MusiCounts), as does the Music Industry Association of Canada and the SOCAN performing rights organization, through the SOCAN Foundation. These groups are funded by the commercial music industry, and they realize that promoting a wide range of musical activities is both good for business and good for art.

This decision followed a report of the Sound Recording Industry commissioned by Heritage Canada ("Summative Evaluation of the Canada Music Fund"). Yet the decision contradicts several of the study's key findings: first, that very few projects are "double dipping", that is, FACTOR and MUSICACTION are not duplicating the Specialized Music Recording program; second, that the funding for Specialized Recording should become part of The Canada Council's regular operating budget (section 5.3.2 of the report - "suggested monies devoted to the CMD component simply should be transferred to the A-base of the Canada Council.").

The report also points out: "Of the three CMF components covered by the survey of recipients, the CMD component (Grants for Specialized Music Recording Production) had the **largest incremental impact** on the production of sound recordings." (section 6.1.3). So it appears the demonstrably most effective part of the program has been cut.

The report also suggests: "PCH should re-design the Canada Music Fund and consult with the music industry as part of the re-design process". This would have to include the **entire** industry, including non-commercial artists and their labels, who the report agrees are an integral and important part of the Canadian music system. (section 6.2.1)

All we are asking is that the government follows its own exhaustive, comprehensive and very well-researched report! The report does not suggest withdrawing this funding, but considers adding it to The Canada Council. Heritage Canada claims that the funding will continue to support non-commercial genres by being transferred to FACTOR and MUSICACTION. This is wishful thinking. Although both agencies play a vital and efficient role in supporting commercial music, they depend on commercial broadcasters for funding, and measure success by sales. They have neither the incentive nor the experience to serve non-commercial music.

Finally, it sets a disturbing precedent to cut this funding just at the time The Canada Council is undergoing a strategic review. It is ineffective, inefficient and incomprehensible that the government would chose to withdraw funding from a program (Specialized Recording) administered by an agency that has consistently received excellent reviews from the Auditor General. Such a punitive decision raises questions about the current government's commitment to the cherished and hard-won principle of arm's-length arts funding in Canada.

If Canada continues to offer a broad diversity of music to its public and if creativity and imagination are given equal place along with commercial considerations, then we will have a strong and healthy environment for music, which helps all artists, all music lovers, and the music industry. It is an interconnected ecosystem that needs every form of music to continue to be available to the Canadian public. We urge the government to reconsider this decision, and to do what is right for Canadian music - for all Canadian music.

Notes:

Report: Summative Evaluation of Canada Music Fund

CMF - Canada Music Fund

CMD - Canada Music Diversity Fund

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