

**Report on Digital Cancon Consultation Event held on  
November 21, 2016 at the Music Building, Room 140, Don  
Wright Faculty of Music, Western University**

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## **Background**

On Tuesday, November 21, 2016, the class Topics in the Popular Music Industry, an elective which is part of the Popular Music Program at the Don Wright Faculty of Music at Western University, participated in a Canadian Content Consultation in the Digital World Event. During this event, students voiced opinions about Canadian content in the digital age using the guidelines provided by the Canadian Government's consultation literature. As third and fourth year popular music studies students, they presented well-informed ideas based on previous class discussions concerning Canadian content laws for airplay and digital music consumption, and on their experience as emerging artists and cultural workers.

In our broader discussion of Canadian music, which took place during the consultation, students expressed their pride for Canadian talent. They enjoy participating in multicultural music events, supporting local music endeavors, and are optimistic about participating in strong cultural economies and communities.

## **Findings and Analysis**

Discussions were guided by the topics suggested in the online DigiCanCon literature. Below are some of the ideas generated by the question "What does a cultural system that supports creators and respects citizen choice look like to you?" In response to this question, the group suggested a cultural system that:

- Allows for choice while helping emerging artists by "getting the word out"
- Uses social media platforms and other current means of promotion
- Supports emerging artists through non-invasive promotion, "sponsored" Facebook posts about local events in newsfeeds and suggested Canadian content material in YouTube sidebars, for example
- Aids those working in mixed media including game design, film, and other collaborations
- Bolsters previously marginalized cultural contributors, such as YouTube creators
- Maintains net neutrality and respects tax payers' dollars
- Provides support to the venues in which artists perform and create
- Fosters collaborations with private organizations and corporations to promote Canadian music
- Encourages production in Canada (MAPL laws were set in place in part to build cultural production infrastructure and were successful due, in part, to Cancon legislature)
- Promotes Canadian culture abroad

The next section of this report is a response to the second discussion topic, "How can we meet the challenge of promoting Canada's creativity in the digital world, and

how can we use digital content to promote a strong democracy?" Students suggested that:

- Canadian content cultural infrastructure should not infringe upon citizens' rights to choose Internet content, but rather should promote/present Cancon as an option
- Promotion should not compromise net-neutrality
- Promotion should be based on known individual preferences, for example, in musical contexts, playlist recommendations that include Canadian artists
- Emphasis should be placed on local live scenes (this model has been successful historically)
- There is a the need for promotion of live, local scenes via digital platforms, particularly social media
- Emerging artists would benefit through partnerships with popular Canadian acts (Arcade Fire, The Weeknd) at live performances such as music festivals
- Support be given to cultural centers/venues that cater not only to established popular acts such as those mentioned above, but also to emerging acts

The following points are in response to the third recommended question, "How do we support Canada's creators and cultural entrepreneurs and help them reach beyond our borders?" In response to this question, students were particularly vocal about the need to remove, revise, or provide funding for Visas for touring performers. The following points illustrate other suggestions. Canadian creators and entrepreneurs can be further supported by:

- Reaching maximal potential in Canada through the promotion of local scenes rather than feeling the need to emphasize Canadian-ness on a national level
- Building a culture foundation where creators can be successful using their Canadian communities as "home-base"
- Having government sponsored events, such as "Canadian Music Week" supported even further or expanded, particularly for artists who are visiting Toronto from other parts of the country
- Emphasizing the economic benefits of having strong local cultural scenes, for example, making communities aware of the economic stimulus generated by events such as the Canadian Country Music Awards which took place in London in the fall of 2016
- Providing more music funding organizations
- Supporting production, upheld by strong promotion via social media and other online networking venues
- Recognizing that the Internet is a global community but Canadian musicians reach fans on a local level
- Increasing the breadth of already well-established Canadian-based cultural events that reach an international audience such as TIFF, North by Northeast, and other various music festivals

- Providing support in order to reach international audiences through partnerships between artists and venues

## **Summary**

The Digital Canadian Content Consultation through the Department of Canadian Heritage process provided an opportunity for students in the class Topics in the Popular Music Industry at Western University to discuss ideas for the promotion and strengthening of musical voices in Canada. As consumers, the participants agreed that it is important to be able to choose Canadian content that is meaningful to them based on their region and known preferences. They also voiced that social media, streaming, and other current digital platforms were the preferred method for the dissemination of promotional material. Discussion participants also emphasized that the promotion of local live musical events and the venues that hold them were important to them. As an alternative to the concept of Canadian content on a national level, students envisioned a shift towards regional content in support of local cultural centers rather than emphasis on national scenes. With regards to the third area of question, participants agreed that Visas for traveling musicians were prohibitive for touring musicians, and that more support was needed in order to establish production centers and promotional avenues for Canadian musicians. Many students also expressed the desire for musicians and other primary stakeholders such as producers to have the ability to remain in Canada as an option. In order for this to take place, however, culture workers need to have supportive infrastructure in place in order to remain in the country. All students were willing contributors in the consultation process and were constructive, respectful, and positive about their responses to the questions provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in this process.

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me at:

[nmarche3@uwo.ca](mailto:nmarche3@uwo.ca).

Sincerely,

Dr. Nicole Marchesseau