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Abstract: This paper focuses on the various interrelationships between the Canadian sound recording industry, broadcasting community, cultural-policy practitioners, and the CRTC, which influenced the application process for MuchMusic (Canada’s national music video service) between 1979 and the station’s debut in 1984. These dates are significant as they witness the intersection of a sound recording industry seeking reinvigoration and additional government support; a broadcast regulator seeking television applicants of solid financial grounding; and a cultural-policy strategy oriented toward improving the marketing and distribution of Canadian cultural products. Each of these elements converge on one point of general assent: that Canada “needed” a national music video broadcaster.

Résumé : Cet article porte sur les rapports divers entre l’industrie canadienne de l’enregistrement sonore, la communauté de radiodiffuseurs, les praticiens de politiques culturelles et le CRTC concernant la demande d’application de Much-Music (service canadien de vidéos musique) entre 1979 et la mise en ondes de la station en 1984. Ces dates sont importantes car elles marquent l’intersection d’une industrie de l’enregistrement sonore cherchant à se renouveler et à se faire appuyer davantage par le gouvernement, d’un organisme de réglementation de la radiodiffusion cherchant des candidats aux finances solides, et d’une stratégie en politique culturelle cherchant à améliorer la promotion et la distribution de produits culturels canadiens. Chacun de ces éléments allait mener à un seul point de convergence : le « besoin » d’un radiodiffuseur national de vidéos musique.

MuchMusic, English Canada’s national music video service, made its debut on September 1, 1984, with six hours of original programming. Most of the videos offered on the first day consisted of heavy-rotation singles from Van Halen, the Cars, Elvis Costello, and Frankie Goes to Hollywood. However, the station also featured works by Canadian artists, including the world premiere of the Spoons’ “Tell No Lies” (Fraser, 1984, p. E7). Originally available exclusively to pay-television subscribers, the station has become part of many basic cable packages in

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English Canada and has expanded, adding an additional English-language music service (MuchMoreMusic); two French language services (MusiquePlus and MusiMax); and international operations in Argentina (MuchaMusica); Finland (Jyrki); and the United States (MuchMusic USA). MuchMusic has also achieved a position of considerable influence as a promotional “gatekeeper” (Hirsch, 1972), facilitating or frustrating the exposure of new musicians and contributing to “the embedding of music within complex layers of discourse about music, surrounding it with performer gossip, concert news and other information” (Straw, 1996, p. 109). It has even incorporated a public-service philosophy into some of its program content, seen through its coverage of federal elections. Together, these elements make MuchMusic arguably one of Canada’s most successful media properties both domestically and abroad.

In spite of this, academic treatment of MuchMusic is scant. Although it is not the purpose of this paper to speculate as to why this is the case, it is important to point out that scholarly discussions of MuchMusic have been relegated to passing references in articles on the Canadian sound recording industry (Straw, 1994, 1996) along with a few entries in the 1992 edition of the Encyclopedia of Music in Canada (Miller, 1992, pp. 895, 914-915). This is compared to the extensive body of work dealing with the American music video channel, MTV (Aufderheide, 1986; Banks, 1996; Baxter et al., 1985; Brown & Campbell, 1986; Denisoff, 1988; Goodwin, 1992, 1993; Gow, 1990; Kaplan, 1987).

Its relative neglect is unfortunate, for MuchMusic’s strategic location, at the intersection of various communications media and industries, makes it a rich object of study. In his discussion of the Canadian film industry, Ted Magder argued that “the history of cultural policy with respect to the cultural industries—and in particular its feature film policy—must be understood within the context of imperialism, but also within the context of domestic social relations and political conflicts” (1993, p. 18). I believe this perspective can be extended to an analysis of MuchMusic. Like radio, MuchMusic draws upon the productive output of another player within the cultural sector, the sound recording industry. Firms within Canada’s music- and video-production sector, (the branch plants of multinational media conglomerates, industry lobby groups, cultural bureaucrats, and the federal broadcast regulator) have all interacted in ways that have shaped the operations and successes (or failures) of the music video channel.

Beginning with the station’s slogan, “The Nation’s Music Station,” we can pose a number of questions: When and why was it decided that Canada needed a national music video service? Who decided this was necessary? How did MuchMusic earn the right to fulfill this need? The answers to these questions can be found by examining the interrelationships between the Canadian sound recording industry and Canadian cultural policy between 1979 and 1984. An analysis of this time period will reveal important clues not only as to major shifts in Canadian cultural policy, but also with regard to the curious position of the English Canadian sound recording industry within Canada’s media ecosystem.
With the 1982 release of the *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee*, co-chaired by Louis Applebaum and Jacques Hébert, government policy toward the cultural realm began to emphasize the marketing and distribution of Canadian cultural products both domestically and in the international marketplace. Included within that discussion was the sound recording industry, a sector that had been largely ignored within cultural policy discourse. To provide justification for additional support of the sound recording industry, the authors of the Applebaum-Hébert report utilized a combination of imagery and rhetoric that closely aligned the sound recording industry with other cultural industry sectors that had garnered government support.

The inclusion of sound recording within the context of a larger governmental emphasis on the marketing and distribution of cultural products was welcome news to an industry suffering through a period of decreased sales and fractured relationships with radio, its key promotional channel. With the tremendous success of American broadcaster MTV in promoting new musical talent, the English Canadian sound recording industry saw a music video channel as a life-line, one not dissimilar to the Canadian content regulations enacted in 1970. The prospects, then, for a national music video service represented the solution both for Canadian cultural policymakers and for the Canadian sound recording industry. The successful applicant for the music video service would not only have to satisfy these demands, but would also have to demonstrate solid financial footing for a broadcast regulator still reeling from the disastrous results stemming from Canada’s first experience with pay television. It is within this context that the application for MuchMusic put forward by Toronto-based broadcaster CHUM Limited emerged as the most viable candidate for the national music video service.

**Sound recording, Canadian cultural policy, and the music video**

On May 4, 1983, the CRTC called for applications for new specialty television licences that would be available to subscribers on a discretionary basis. The request for proposals marked the second phase of pay television and came three months after the initial round of pay-television licences went on the air. Within a year, the broadcast lives of the C Channel, TVEC (available in Quebec), and Super Channel were cut short, leaving only First Choice to survive due to a last-minute bailout by the CRTC (Raboy, 1990, p. 276). The reasons for the failure of these pay-television services are many, but the combination of unimaginative program content (mainly Hollywood feature films on First Choice and Super Channel) and a lack of subscriber demand are often cited as important factors.³

To avoid repeating the embarrassing situation from the first experience with pay television, the CRTC’s call for specialty program services stressed that prospective entrants to the broadcasting landscape would not jeopardize the operations of existing broadcasters. In its “definition and nature of specialty programming services,” the CRTC outlined its interest in narrowcast television programming “designed to reflect the particular interests and needs of different age, language, cultural, geographic, or other groups” (CRTC, 1983, p. 4444).
These services might comprise such theme programming as news, sports, health and medical awareness, multicultural, and children’s content. However, receiving special mention in the CRTC’s discussion was a music video program format “which could include productions of recording artists in concert, video adaptations of studio recording sessions or experimental music video recordings” (CRTC, 1983, p. 4445).

The decision to accept applications for the specialty television license, including a national music video service, needs to be understood in the context of a number of developments occurring at the time within the broadcasting and sound recording industries at the level of Canadian cultural policy. The 1982 report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, co-chaired by Louis Applebaum and Jacques Hébert, would provide the rationale for future policy initiatives, particularly those directed at the Canadian sound recording industry and, not coincidentally, at the development of the national music video service.

Mike Gasher maintains the Applebaum-Hébert report represented a significant shift in the philosophy used for state intervention in the cultural realm and in the role played by the private sector within Canadian cultural production. He explains that “[i]n a radical departure from its predecessors, Applebaum-Hébert insisted cultural production was an end in itself, rather than a tool of nationalism,” and that the role of government within the cultural realm was to “remove obstacles and enlarge opportunities, without seeking to direct” (1997, p. 24; see also Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 1982, p. 75). Gasher explains that rather than aping the anticommercial and anti-American tone of the earlier Aird, Massy-Lévesque, and Fowler Commission reports, Applebaum-Hébert lamented the dominance of American cultural products in the Canadian marketplace not because of any pernicious American influence, but because Canadian cultural works were correspondingly under-represented. The authors of the report seemed more interested in reclaiming Canada’s place in the international marketplace than in trying to rewrite the rules of media capitalism (1997, p. 25). In its discussion of what would normally be considered the “threat” of American cable programming, Applebaum-Hébert took the offensive and adopted a proactive stance. Instead of interfering with the entertainment choices of citizens, the authors of the report explained that government policy should seek to give Canadians “what they want”:

If cable television posed a threat to Canadian broadcasting because of its importation of U.S. television stations, it is sobering to contemplate what the impact will be when a host of U.S. services can be received via satellite anywhere in Canada—not just in locations near the border or where cable systems exist. Restrictions are not the solution. In the long-term, no government or regulatory agency can, or should, prevent the public from obtaining access to the foreign programs and services it wants. But if Canada is to remain a programming presence in its own broadcasting and telecommunications system, it must use all its technological and creative resources to provide Canadian programs and services that Canadians want to see and hear, programs that are competi-
Another significant element of the Applebaum-Hébert report was its expression of concern over the effectiveness of Canadian content regulations, the CRTC’s primary mode of implementing policy initiatives. While recognizing the importance of Canadian-produced programs, the report claimed that the CRTC’s actual power to enforce content restrictions was mitigated by the threats to the economic viability of broadcasters (Raboy, 1990, p. 283). As a result, the commissioners suggested, “[S]ome other solution must be found to ensure that cultural values and goals are not completely expunged from private broadcasting” (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 1982, p. 287). When the new policy strategy was issued by the Department of Communications in 1983, many of its initiatives were adaptations of proposals made by Applebaum-Hébert, with a central emphasis on increasing the private sector’s capacity to produce high-quality programs that could be marketed on an international scale (Raboy, 1996, p. 187).

Concerns about the effectiveness of Canadian content regulations were also an important element of the report’s analysis of the state of the Canadian sound recording industry. As was the case with Canadian television, Applebaum-Hébert acknowledged that Canadian content regulations for radio broadcasters, the key promotional channel for recorded music, were not sufficient in providing Canadian listeners with a diversity of locally produced musical talent. This caused the report’s authors to explain that “if quality Canadian recordings are to be available in sufficient quantity and variety for AM and FM stations to play, and Canadians to enjoy, federal policy must also concern itself with production, distribution, and marketing issues” (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 1982, p. 239). 6

The fact that the sound recording industry received attention in the pages of the Applebaum-Hébert report represents an important development. In his 1983 study of Canada’s cultural industries, Paul Audley pointed to the government’s relative lack of attention to the sound recording industry by explaining “from an economic perspective, the industry is relatively small and categorized as part of the ‘miscellaneous’ manufacturing industry group, while as a cultural activity its significance has been largely overlooked by government” (1983, p. 141). The Applebaum-Hébert report had earlier presaged these sentiments, stating that current support programs consisted of a small fund established by the CBC to assist the recording of some musical genres, a Canada Council program supporting the production of more “serious music,” a grant to the Canadian Independent Record Producers Association (CIRPA) to devise a catalogue for retail outlets, and support for conventions from the Department of Industry, Trade, and Commerce. Not surprisingly, the committee concluded, “[A]s helpful as those measures are, they constitute only the bare beginnings of a federal policy for Canadian sound recording” (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 1982, p. 236). The report recommended federal assistance to Canadian-owned record companies to strengthen distribution and contribute to marketing costs—all to bring Canadian artists to the public in a manner more effective than Canadian content regulations.
Before giving its recommendations, the committee needed to provide the justification for increased support to the Canadian sound recording industry. One of the subtle tactics used by the authors of the Applebaum-Hébert report was to re-establish the importance of sound recording, and in particular popular music, within Canadian cultural policy discourse. The chapter on sound recording begins by aligning the underserved sector with one already recognized as worthy of policy support, and by then implying its equivalent value, stating that “[s]ound recording, like broadcasting, with which it is closely involved, has become a pervasive feature on the social and cultural landscape” (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 1982, p. 236). Later on the authors assert that sound recording is “one of the seminal cultural influences of our times … yet paradoxically, the sound recording industry has not usually been included among other cultural industries when major support policies were being considered by the federal government” (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 1982, p. 236). With its cultural importance, and its conspicuous absence within policy established, the authors of the Applebaum-Hébert report could now set about bolstering the image of the Canadian musical experience:

What we hear on record can depend on personal taste or merely on circumstance. The content may consist of any number of types and styles of music; it may even consist of the spoken word. Sound recordings can appeal to mass audiences, young or old, or be interesting to only small segments of the population. But whatever their content, they share the convenience of being relatively inexpensive, and highly portable, and therefore accessible to many; a sound recording is a movable concert hall, stage or classroom, available for enjoying in the place and at the time of the listener’s choosing, able to leap time and space to bring the individual into intimate touch with the artist. (Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, 1982, p. 235)

A few elements of this passage warrant brief discussion. First, we can see the attempt at distancing music’s “popular” (and, within the context of traditional nationalist policy discourse, American) connotations with the language of access and consumer choice, echoing the sentiments of the commissioners. What follows is the transposition of a more refined “cultural” perspective onto the musical experience itself, through the analogy of the sound recording as concert hall, stage, or classroom.

This approach is reminiscent of the response by Canadian cultural critics and activists to the influx of American popular culture flowing across the border during the interwar years. As Charles Acland explains, what resulted was a reconceptualization of Canadian leisure time and, in the context of film, of the cinema-going experience:

Accordingly, the interwar period saw the cultivation of lecture circuits, traveling film projectionists, traveling art exhibits, radio forums, drama leagues, adult education, magazines, and conferences. In response to the seductions of U.S. culture, leisure was seen as a kind of work, one that built character and citizens, and which was therefore in the service of the nation. After years of lobbying government for aid, this new cultural infrastructure of voluntary
societies, along with its educative agenda, became embedded in Canadian film policy with the formation of the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada in 1939. With this institution came two developments. First, cinema-going became associated with the lecture, the discussion, and the school. Second, the establishment of the NFB led to the appreciation of certain film forms, in particular, experimental and documentary film, over the conventions of Hollywood narrative. (1997, p. 289)

The effect here is important. If the sound recording industry had been ignored within cultural policy, the members of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee needed to provide the rationale for government support. Reformulating the experience of Canadian music at the level of policy in a way that incorporated a “character building, space-binding, and artful” musical experience represented an attempt at accomplishing this goal.

This change in position was welcome news to Canada’s sound recording industry, which, like that in the United States, had been going through an uncharacteristic period of decline. Since the advent of rock music in the 1950s, the American sound recording industry had enjoyed unbroken success for more than 25 years. Over this period, sales grew consistently at a rate of 20% per year, finally peaking in 1977 and 1978 (Banks, 1996, p. 31). Historical sales data on the Canadian sound recording industry has been more difficult to ascertain. Statistics Canada’s 1977 survey of the recording industry represents the first comprehensive work in this sector. However, using data concerning the volume and value of record imports and exports and the value of Canadian manufacturing activity, Paul Audley was able to show a trend in record and tape sales beginning in 1970. This trend corroborates growth trends occurring in the United States (Audley, 1983, p. 143). The back cover of the May 20, 1978, issue of Billboard magazine announced that Fleetwood Mac’s album Rumours had become the first to sell a million copies in Canada. However, sales figures for both the American and Canadian sound recording industries experienced periods of sharp decline, recovery, and decline between 1981 and 1983.

One important reason for this difficult period was the changing relationship between record companies and radio stations across North America. Some have suggested that conservatism within the radio industry during the 1970s created its own constraints on innovation and diversity (see Lopes, 1992, pp. 67-69). A 1980 Billboard article entitled “In Canada: Programming Hurting New Product Sales” suggested that, as was the case with American radio, Canadian radio station playlists became markedly conservative as program directors chose to exploit established performers over the untested newer artists promoted by record companies (December 20, p. 43).

An already popular mode of exposing audiences to new acts in the United Kingdom, the music video emerged on the North American scene as the possible antidote to the conservatism of radio and the diminishing promotional influence of the medium felt at the time.7 Music videos were appearing on some American and Canadian television programs and becoming popular fare at local discotheques and videotheques. Meanwhile a new station, MTV, had begun broad-
casting on August 21, 1981. By 1984 its audience had grown to 22 million, with advertising revenue reaching US $1 million per week (Kaplan, 1987, pp. 1-3). In addition, it appeared that music video was beginning to represent an important promotional tool leading to increased music sales.

A Nielsen study of the day found that 63% of survey respondents reported purchasing an album after viewing a video clip featuring the artist’s music (Banks, 1996, p. 36). MTV’s ability to deliver national exposure of new acts was dramatically different than the uneven reach of FM radio, even if radio appealed to a larger aggregate audience (Straw, 1993, p. 8). This was particularly true for new artists who had produced videos for consumption on European television. When MTV began broadcasting, the limited number of music videos produced by American acts meant that British performers such as Duran Duran, the Eurythmics, and the Human League received heavy airplay.

The prospects for a music video channel to reinvigorate the Canadian sound recording industry and to liberate Canadian artists from the restrictive practices of radio programmers stirred considerable excitement, particularly among industry-association lobby groups. In his testimony before the CRTC during the licence hearings for the specialty broadcast service, CIRPA president Earl Rosen was unequivocal, restating an earlier written submission that “the future of the music industry will be determined by the licensing decision of the CRTC.” After reminding the commissioners of the success of Canadian content regulations in creating opportunities for Canadian musicians, Rosen went on to say that a Canadian music video channel was “absolutely necessary if we are to continue this growth.”

[W]ithout a Canadian music video channel to give us access to our most important audience, no record company, either independent or major, can afford to invest heavily in music videos. Without videos, we are precluded from international markets. The failure to establish a Canadian music video service would be the same as condemning the record industry to manufacture only 78s after the introduction of 33 LPs. (CRTC, 1984a, p. 3222)

In contrast to Rosen’s enthusiasm, Canadian Recording Industry Association (CRIA) president Brian Robertson’s presentation before the CRTC was measured. Robertson did not question the importance of music videos as a promotional tool, but rather expressed concern that since the licence was to be granted on a discretionary basis, the music video channel would not meet its desired goals to reach a broad Canadian audience. Robertson also reminded the commission of the cost of music video production and further aligned the futures of the speciality service and the sound recording industry by explaining that “when a video music applicant relies so heavily on another industry to supply the majority of his programming at little or no cost, then it is only realistic to recognize the problems and needs of the supplier” (CRTC, 1984a, p. 117). However CRIA’s plea for understanding was somewhat undermined by one of its own witnesses. After explaining that there were probably fewer than a hundred high-quality Canadian music
videos in circulation, A&M Canada vice-president of promotion Larry Chappell maintained that their promotional potential might offset the costs of development.

I might add that I do not think we are really looking for compensation right now. Our main objective is to reach as many people as possible with the music channel, and at that point—at this present time, I think we are ready to absorb our costs of the production, as long as the end product will reach a quantity of people. (CRTC, 1984a, p. 129)

On the subject of a domestically owned and operated video service, however, Robertson and Rosen were in agreement.

Finally Mr. Chairman, on the question of importation of foreign music video programming services, we recommend that no consideration be given to importing in whole, or in part, music video program services that originate outside of Canada. (Robertson, in CRTC, 1984a, p. 120)

If the emergence of music video and the transformation of the broadcasting industry supplied the industrial motivation for a Canadian music video channel, the developments from the Applebaum-Hébert report provided the policy rationale for the support of the domestic sound recording industry and broadcasting landscape. With the prospects of a national music video channel, the interests of the various sectors began to intersect; the position of the sound recording industry within Canadian cultural policy began to solidify; and the need for a national music video station emerged. The successful applicant for the music video channel would not only have to satisfy the demands of a fiscally sensitive federal regulator and a market-driven, “private sector-friendly” cultural policy orientation, but also those of a recovering domestic sound recording industry seeking to capitalize on its new found importance within policy discourse.

Fighting for the right to rock: MuchMusic and the CRTC

Of the 41 candidates for the specialty television licence, five were vying for the specialty music video service. In addition to the application put forward by the CHUM/Citytv contingent were submitted the following: the Music Channel, by Rogers Radio Broadcasting Limited and Molson Limited; Canadian Music TV (CMTV), led by Montreal real estate developer Gilles Chartrand; and two applications by concert promoter Donald Tarlton in conjunction with Astral Communications and Michael Sheridan, a Torontonian with little broadcasting experience (Miller, 1984b, p. 1). Early in the licensing process, it became apparent that only the CHUM/Citytv, Rogers/Molson, and Chartrand applications would have a legitimate chance of winning the broadcasting licence.

One of the most convincing aspects of the MuchMusic application was its assertion of superior marketing savvy and commitment to Canadian music. In Canada, the period between 1981 and 1984 saw only a few random segments of music video programming broadcast over local stations and national networks. The most active user of music video programming was Citytv, an independent UHF/cable station based in the Toronto area and owned by CHUM. In 1979, the station premiered its music news and information program, entitled The New
Music. The program was the creation of John Martin, a former producer in the current affairs department at the CBC. By mixing coverage of musical trends, performer spotlights, and promotional videos and clips from performances within the Toronto-area, The New Music treated popular music as a serious journalistic subject. This can be seen in its coverage of such events as Bob Marley’s funeral and the riot that erupted during Alice Cooper’s failure to appear for a Toronto concert in 1980 (Fay, 1997, p. 15).

An important feature of The New Music was a series of televised concerts featuring new Canadian (and some American) talent, which were simulcast on local radio stations. These New Music Specials began in 1978 (a year before The New Music began airing regularly) and continued until 1983. The series represented the most consistent effort to showcase new artists on Canadian television during this period. The program featured concerts with Bruce Cockburn, Bob McBride, Murray McLachlan, the Downchild Blues Band, Carole Pope, the Madcats, the Good Brothers, Lene Lovich, Streetheart, Canadian Brass, Goddo, the Minglewood Band, Lisa dalBello, and Max Webster. After successfully airing in Toronto, The New Music achieved additional status as the authoritative source for Canadian and international music information through syndication in 15 markets across Canada (Flohil & Harry, 1983, p. 16). During this period Citytv also launched two other music video programs. The first, City Limits, aired late at night on weekends and comprised improvisational skits, comedy, and experimental-music videos. In 1983, the station also introduced CHUM Top 30, a weekly countdown program featuring disc jockeys from CHUM’s AM and FM radio stations operating in Toronto (Flohil & Harry, 1983, p. 16).

As part of its presentation before the CRTC, the Citytv application maintained that MuchMusic would offer a number of programs on a range of subjects, thus allowing Canadian performers of different musical genres the opportunity to have their videos shown on the channel. Since the Canadian recording industry had not yet produced an extensive range of music videos, the new service would be established in such a way as to stimulate activity in the Canadian production sector.

If the CHUM/Citytv application had the blessing of members of the sound recording industry, the company’s fiscal approach also seemed to satisfy the nervous broadcast regulator. The failure of the C Channel, as we have seen, had made the CRTC wary of issuing broadcasting licences. The limited potential of pay television at this time, witnessed not only by C Channel’s failures but also by the tenuous positions of First Choice and Super Channel, forced applicants to prove they had the financial power to absorb start-up costs and to remain in the Canadian broadcasting landscape over the long term.

In its presentation to the CRTC, the CHUM/Citytv contingent emphasized the financial health of the new station by stating unequivocally that it would break even within five years of receiving the broadcasting licence. Station representatives also highlighted the fact that its existing facilities and its library of music video programming placed the prospective channel in a better position for broad-
cast than the other applicants. Although using the Citytv studios and staff to perform many of the functions involved in running the new-music station would result in losses of $9 million after five years, the application stated that half of this figure could be recovered by the CHUM radio group through tax rebates (Miller, 1984a, p. B4). By comparison, the CHUM/Citytv contingent argued, another organization would not be able to capitalize on these synergies, resulting in debts of up to $15 million (Miller, 1984b, p. F1). Here the company was placed at an advantage over all of the other candidates, whereas its own lack of solid footing placed the CMTV bid in great jeopardy. By contrast, the Rogers/Molson bid possessed the solid financial footing needed to satisfy the broadcast regulator; however, questions had emerged about the precise ownership arrangement of the music station. CRTC commissioners were concerned that the relationship between cable operator and major advertiser might affect the choice of music video programming selected for the national service.

In its decision to award the broadcasting licence, the CRTC began by restating the importance of music video as a medium allowing for the “increased exposure of new as well as established artists and the emergence of new talent and musical styles.” It then turned its direction inward, focusing on the fact that Canadian record companies and artists had experienced tremendous difficulty reaping the promotional benefits of the music video in the absence of a Canadian music video service. In line with the new initiatives stated throughout the Applebaum-Hébert report and integrated into the Communications department policy objectives (see Raboy, 1990, pp. 286-288), the CRTC decision maintained that

[t]he establishment of a Canadian specialty music network should, therefore, assure a marked increase in the production of Canadian music videos and the exposure of Canadian talent, and should stimulate both the independent Canadian production and the Canadian recording industries to experiment and respond to the demands of the growing audience for music video programming. (CRTC, 1984b)

As a result, the commission awarded broadcast licences to MuchMusic and to the Sports Network, a subsidiary of the John Labatt Brewery Company. In addition, the CRTC authorized cable companies to bring in 17 American services, including CNN. One of the conditions of MuchMusic’s licence application was that a minimum of 10% of all the music video clips broadcast on a daily basis be Canadian. This requirement would increase to 20% in the beginning of the third year of operation (CRTC, 1984b). To help increase the number of Canadian content-oriented videos on the broadcaster, the CRTC attached as a condition of the broadcast licence a requirement whereby the broadcaster would have to contribute 2.4% of its gross revenues (to a maximum of $100,000 per year) toward a video-production fund administered by an independent advisory board composed of representatives from MuchMusic, CIRPA, and other members of the Canadian music industry. This fund, called VideoFact, was established in 1984. By 1991, more than 450 videos had been made with $2.8 million of VideoFact support, including 127 in 1990 alone (Miller, 1992, p. 895). Less than two weeks after
granting the MuchMusic licence, the CRTC established a new set of rules governing a distinctly “Canadian Program.” This redefinition would include new criteria for “Canadian content” music videos (CRTC, 1984c).

Conclusion
In the over 15 years since acquiring its television licence, MuchMusic has established itself as a significant force within the Canadian sound recording industry. By isolating the period surrounding MuchMusic’s debut, one can clearly see that while changes occurring in the American music industry (such as the entry of MTV) influenced the development of Canadian music video programming, a number of crucial events occurring in Canada also played a determining role in MuchMusic’s evolution. These were directly related to Canada’s own experience with pay television (one marked by failure and embarrassment) and to changing attitudes of policymakers toward the cultural industries, particularly the Canadian sound recording industry. The shifting policy strategy for the sound recording industry modelled itself after similar strategic initiatives carried out earlier by the film and television industries. Beginning in the late 1960s, Canada had begun to alter its relationship to its cultural production—to one that considered Canadian films, programs, and artistic works not simply as important artifacts of “Canadian identity,” but as something produced by the “cultural industries.” While the unchanging goal of cultural production remained one of articulating a Canadian identity, this shift in perspective by the state represented the belief that the best form of autonomy was to be attained through economic independence to be won by the development of the cultural industries (Dowler, 1996).

By 1980-81, the “social” elements of the Canadian cultural system were almost completely marginalized by the Department of Communication’s position, which held that the role of cultural policy was for the development of cultural industries (Dorland, 1996, p. 351). This transformation would have major ramifications, affecting the ways government was to conceive of and administer to the cultural sector in the years that followed. As a result of the particular orientation expressed by the Applebaum-Hébert report, the CHUM/Citytv application was now the only serious contender for the national music video licence, as it possessed the marketing prowess, commitment to Canadian music promotion, and solid fiscal footing needed to placate the various interested parties that stood to benefit from MuchMusic’s influential national reach.

In a recent article in the Journal of Canadian Studies, Will Straw (2000) observed that

[m]ore recently, to listen to music as an Anglophone Canadian may mean attendance at events in which the sprawling bigness of the rock concert nourishes the raucous pop nationalism of the Tragically Hip, in contexts that link band, venue and audience to the national commercial iconography of breweries, sports franchises, and Canadian-owned cellular phone companies.

(p. 175)
Straw went on to discuss several ways in which this situation colours our understanding of popular music’s place within Canadian cultural policy.

The “health” of Canadian music, as the object of public policy and intervention, resists diagnosis in large measure because the place of music itself within discourses of national cultural identity remains vague and elusive. Policies to support Canadian news media are typically justified in terms that invoke the need for a national conversation, or for information that reflects the distinct concerns of Canadians. The platitudes of film and television policy often speak of these media’s role in offering the dramaturgical mirrors from which a national imaginary is meant to take sustenance. Policy statements about music, in contrast, rarely express more than the desire for a “healthy and competitive environment within which Canadian musical talent can flourish.” (p. 176)

It is likely that this logic, which places sound recording within the context of a market-oriented cultural policy, first becomes established through the pages of the Applebaum-Hebert report. This document provided the governmental rationale for the development of a national music video service. The events the report set in motion continue to provide inspiration for future pathways of research, such as historical analyses of MuchMusic programming and format changes, the station’s contribution to an English Canadian “star system”, and its location within discourses of Canadian national identity.

Notes
1. Versions of this paper were presented in May 2000 at both the conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (Canadian Chapter) in Quebec City and the Canadian Communications Association’s annual conference in Edmonton. I would like to thank Will Straw for his comments and guidance through the writing process. I am also grateful for the helpful criticisms of two anonymous reviewers. Finally, I would like to thank John Martin and Michael Hayden for taking the time to speak with me, by telephone and in person, between October and December 1999.
2. During the recent federal elections, the station promoted an underage Prime Ministerial election featuring the cartoon members of the band Prozzak as candidates (MuchMusic, 2000; Prozzak, 2000). In addition, MuchMusic devoted time for interviews with each of the major and fringe political candidates, making the station an important stop on the campaign trail.
3. For a discussion of some of the practical and logistical problems of carrying out research on the Canadian sound recording industry in general, see Straw (1994, p. 55). Although the presence of multinational branch plant organizations and smaller, short-lived locally based record companies has certainly frustrated research on the Canadian sound recording industry, these problems do not necessarily apply to MuchMusic. The station has remained under the same ownership since its inception and possesses a comprehensive archive of video clips and television programming.
5. Marc Raboy’s history of Canadian broadcasting policy shows that Canada’s interest in pay television dates back to 1970 but intensifies into the mid-1970s, spurred on by examinations of the delayed access of mainstream television service in northern areas of the country (1990, pp. 273-276). For another interesting account of Canadian pay television’s maiden voyage, see Hardin (1985, pp. 291-328).
6. Before the Applebaum-Hebert report was released, a number of participants in the Canadian recording industry began to actively address these issues. In 1982, CHUM, Moffatt Communic-
tions, Rogers Broadcasting Limited, CIPRA, and the Canadian Music Publishers Association created FACTOR (Fund to Assist Canadian Talent on Record). FACTOR became a channel through which radio broadcasters could channel money to the Canadian music industry. A jury system was established to evaluate applications, and funding was made available to eligible Canadian music acts to produce videotapes, organize promotional tours, make promotional video clips, and carry out various other activities. Four years after FACTOR was established, the federal Department of Communications lent further support through the creation of the Sound Recording Development Program (SRDP) in 1986. The program, which contributed $25 million over five years, further contributed to the development of Canadian talent, but it emphasized increasing exposure on an international scale through supporting participation in global conferences and conventions (Straw, 1994, p. 54; 1996, p. 106).

7. For a “pre-history” of music video, including discussions of early musical films and musical television programs, see Banks (1996, pp. 23-62) and Denisoff (1988, pp. 7-57) for the United States, Fryer (1997) for the United Kingdom, and Rutherford (1990) for Canada.

8. An article in The Music Scene claimed that at this time domestically made videos comprised approximately 8% of the total estimated number of music videos worldwide (Hayes, 1983, p. 8).

9. In addition to programming on CBC (which included the children’s program Switchback, which aired in Halifax, Vancouver, and Winnipeg), multicultural broadcaster CFMT-TV, based in Toronto, represents an important pioneer in English Canadian music video programming. The first broadcast was a late-night program entitled Chuck the Security Guard, featuring comedian Chas Lawther in the role of Chuck. An article about the program provides an interesting description of the music video use within the larger program format:

Chuck plays videocassettes of vintage television series such as The Honeymooners, Car 54, Where Are You? Burns and Allen, and The Twilight Zone, alternating them with promotional clips from rock n’ roll stars (David Bowie, Tom Petty, Elvis Costello), cartoons (Betty Boop) and kinescopes by completely unknown performers from the fifties (Freedman, 1981, p. E1).

In 1983 Video Singles, a countdown top-40 program, began aiming at the after-school market, as did a program entitled Rockline. This genealogy is based on an examination of local television guides from the period 1980 to 1982. At this early stage, this history is by no means complete; I have only consulted television listings in the Toronto and Montreal area. Further examination of television listings from Vancouver, Halifax, and Calgary may yield other programming occurring at this time. In addition, I have not examined the state of French-language video programming from this period.

10. This list of performers spotlighted on The New Music Specials is from a press release on The New Music that is included in MuchMusic’s license application to the CRTC. No date on the press release was indicated.

References


Pegley, Karen. (1999). *An analysis of the construction of national, racial, and gendered identities on MuchMusic (Canada) and MTV (United States)*. PhD dissertation, York University, Toronto.


