

# Foggy future for Canadian music videos as MuchFact funding up in the air

**Bell Media has wiggled out of a CRTC requirement to fund program, but hasn't cancelled it — yet**

By Haydn Watters, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 18, 2017 4:43 PM ET

You would be forgiven if you missed it. But a single line in a just released CRTC decision could make it a lot harder to get music videos made in Canada.

Scroll down, way down, to section 55 [in this Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission decision](#) and you'll see that Bell Media is no longer required to contribute to MuchFact, a small but mighty music program which shells out about \$2 million for Canadian music videos every year. The program was started in 1984 (then known as VideoFact) and has handed out more than \$100 million for around 9,000 projects by Canadian musicians, who apply for funding.

Bell Media confirms it asked for the requirement to be axed. The CRTC also ruled the telecom was no longer required to contribute to BravoFact, which funds short-form scripted projects.

"We are currently reviewing both programs and no decisions have been made regarding their future at this time," Scott Henderson, Bell Media's vice-president of communications, said in a statement. "Both programs continue to accept grant applications in anticipation of their next funding deadlines later this year."

But Bernie Finkelstein, who founded the program with media mogul Moses Znaimer and chaired it for more than 25 years before leaving in 2011, doesn't think it'll last long.

"I'll be very surprised if this is still going by Christmas," he said. "They've been trying to shut it down for a long time."

## 'Video ... more important than ever'

Finkelstein, who has retired from the industry but still manages Bruce Cockburn, said if that happens, it'll be a big blow for musicians and filmmakers.

"It's ironic because video is actually more important than ever for artists," he said, with YouTube being a key place for people to find new music.

"People watch videos everywhere but TV."



Canadian music manager Bernie Finkelstein helped found MuchFact in 1984 and chaired it for more than 25 years. He thinks Bell Media will stop funding it now that they are no longer required to do so by the CRTC. (Aaron Vincent Elkaim/Canadian Press)

And though he's saddened thinking about the program's future, he's proud of what it has accomplished.

Funding goes to both established artists and up-and-comers; indie heavy hitters Broken Social Scene and Wintersleep are among the latest recipients, but the list also includes lesser known names like Toronto singer-songwriter Taylor Knox and Montreal rapper Lou Phelps.

"We were the first people to give people like Arcade Fire money," he said. "It would have been great had it outlived me but unless I have really bad luck in the next couple of months, it doesn't look like it's going to."

Scott Hutton, the CRTC's executive director of broadcasting, justified the broadcast regulator's decision, telling CBC News the station has evolved, and its programming no longer revolves totally around music videos.

"It ends up being difficult to ask someone who's no longer in that business to continue in supporting a very minute or very precise funding towards certain funds," he said.

## 'We basically view it as the end of music videos in Canada'

There are other places to get money for videos, like the Foundation Assisting Canadian Talent on Recordings (Factor). But filmmaker Jared Raab said it offers only a fraction of what MuchFact does.

"It's been essentially the only show in town when it comes to [making] videos that are free of label influence," he said. "We basically view it as the end of music videos in Canada."

Raab has directed and produced many music videos which have gotten MuchFact funding, including July Talk's *Picturing Love*. That video was nominated for a Prism Prize, handed out last Sunday to the best Canadian music video. **Of the 10 videos shortlisted** for this year's prize, six had MuchFact funding **including the winner, Kaytranada's *Lite Spots***.

"What kind of blows my mind is kind of the massive impact that such a small program had," he said, before correcting his tense. "It's devastating to established artists because music videos are hard enough to make as it is."

He hopes another funding body steps in should MuchFact fall.

"It's something we should be funding in this country if we care about growing new talent."

## 'They really put me on the map'

Rapper Rollie Pemberton, who goes by Cadence Weapon, credits his rise to MuchFact, for funding his first two music videos.

"They really put me on the map as an artist in Canada," he said. "We don't have to be Justin Bieber to be able to be on TV."

Pemberton has continued to get funding through his career, including earlier this year to make the video for his song, *My Crew (Woooo)*. The money let him shoot it on a large sound stage and use a giant sling shot-type contraption to make it seem like it was filmed in a black void. The same equipment was used in Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi film *Arrival*.

"If it wasn't for MuchFact, that wouldn't have even been a conversation," he said. "I can go as far as my creativity can take me."

He said the money sets musicians apart from their American counterparts, who have expressed their jealousy to Pemberton. He's willing to fight to keep the MuchFact funding coming but worries what the future holds.

"I feel really sorry for the next generation of musicians," he said. "They might not even realize what they've lost."