

Generative Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of Music Creators

Executive Summary

The Songwriters Association of Canada (S.A.C.) represents the collective voice of Canadian songwriters— the music creators whose intellectual property forms the foundation of the music industry and fuels Canada’s global cultural influence.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) presents both opportunity and existential risk. While S.A.C. supports innovation and the responsible integration of technology into the creative process, we are deeply concerned that many AI systems are trained on copyrighted musical works without consent, compensation, or credit. These systems are then used to create works which compete directly with human-authored works in the marketplace.

This unauthorized use undermines the livelihoods of music creators, redirects revenues to large foreign technology companies, and threatens Canada’s cultural diversity and economic sustainability.

S.A.C. calls on the Government of Canada to act decisively to protect creators’ rights, promote ethical innovation, and ensure that AI development respects intellectual property.

Key Recommendations

- Mandate transparency
- Reject any commercial Text and Data Mining (TDM) exceptions
- Encourage licensing and market-based solutions
- Support an independent, expert-led WIPO study

Who We Are / Who We Represent

1. The Songwriters Association of Canada (S.A.C.) is a national, non-profit organization that has represented the interests of Canadian songwriters for over 40 years.
 2. With a 100% Canadian board of directors composed entirely of professional, working songwriters, S.A.C. advocates for the music creators who generate the fundamental and valuable intellectual property underpinning Canada's cultural and economic ecosystem.
 3. Songwriters create the lyrics and melodies that:
 - Provide the foundation of the recorded and live music industry.
 - Drive digital platforms.
 - Support film and television.
 - Help shape the identity of our nation.
 4. Songwriters are not only artists — they are entrepreneurs and businesses, innovators, and cultural ambassadors.
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What's at Stake

5. Generative AI is transforming the creative landscape at an unprecedented pace. For Canada — **the third-largest exporter of music globally** (after the U.S. and U.K.)¹ — this disruption carries significant cultural and economic implications.
 - The Canadian music industry is a major contributor to the national economy².
 - Music is a key pillar of linguistic and cultural diversity, reflecting our bilingual heritage and regional richness.
 - Our collective intellectual property is a vital and valuable national resource that drives domestic growth and international recognition.

¹ <https://luminatedata.com/blog/music-trade-update-q1-2025s-top-countries-in-export-power/>

² https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/canadas-arts-and-culture-sector-contributed-65-billion-in-gdp-new-report-finds/article_85be1594-a426-48a6-bbbd-e58e63aede54.html

6. If Canada fails to protect this creative infrastructure, we risk allowing foreign AI companies to extract and monetize Canadian works without returning value to the Canadian economy and the creators who produced them.
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The Issue with Generative AI

7. Many GenAI systems are trained using vast quantities of copyright-protected musical works, often obtained without authorization. These works are then used to generate new, competing content — effectively displacing the very creators whose work powers the systems.
 8. Consequences Include:
 - No consent or compensation for creators.
 - Domestic and international revenue loss to large foreign technology companies.
 - Erosion of local creative economies.
 - Threats to cultural diversity and the sustainability of Canada’s creative workforce.
 9. This results in an ecosystem where human creativity is devalued and displaced by artificial output trained on human-made works — with no benefit returning to Canadians or the Canadian economy ³.
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Music Creators Are Technology Leaders

10. Music creators have always been early adopters of technology — from multi-track recording to synthesizers and sampling. Today, many songwriters incorporate AI tools into their creative workflows. S.A.C. is not opposed to innovation. We champion responsible innovation that includes and uplifts creators.
11. AI companies depend on human creative works to function. Therefore, creators must share in the economic value their works generate. The path forward should ensure that technological progress strengthens, rather than replaces, Canada’s cultural sector.

³ <https://www.cisac.org/Newsroom/news-releases/global-economic-study-shows-human-creators-future-risk-generative-ai>

Transparency Is Essential

12. Transparency is the foundation of ethical AI governance. Creators cannot defend, license, or manage their rights if they are unaware that their works have been used to train AI systems.

13. S.A.C. calls for regulation mandating transparency including:

- Disclosure of which copyrighted works have been ingested (inputs).
- Clear identification and disclosure of any copyrighted materials that contributed to the creation of new AI-generated works (outputs).
- Public access to training data sources.
- Clear consumer labelling of wholly AI-generated outputs.

14. Transparency enables licensing, enforcement, remuneration and informed policymaking — allowing creators to participate fairly in AI-related economic opportunities.

No Text and Data Mining (TDM) Exceptions

15. Introducing a commercial TDM exception into Canada's Copyright Act would severely undermine creators' rights and Canada's collective licensing framework. Such an exception would:

- Allow multinational AI developers to use Canadian works without authorization.
- Remove the ability of rightsholders to control and monetize their works.
- Undermine Canada's digital sovereignty and export potential.

16. Australia has recently set an important precedent by rejecting commercial TDM exceptions in favour of licensing and consent-based approaches⁴. Canada should follow this model to similarly safeguard its cultural economy.

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/oct/27/labor-rules-out-giving-tech-giants-free-rein-to-mine-copyright-content-to-train-ai>

Licensing and Market-Based Solutions

17. Canada must foster an environment where AI developers can license Canadian creative works ethically and efficiently. This approach will ensure:
- Fair compensation for creators and sustained growth of the Canadian music ecosystem.
 - Predictable and legal access for AI innovators.
18. The Government should implement policies that support the licensing of Canadian creative intellectual property (IP) for use in training generative AI systems and subsequent outputs.
19. The music industry has always relied on licensing, and Canadian collective societies exist precisely to ensure that commercial users can legally access Canadian creative works under copyright law.
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Independent, Expert-Led WIPO Study

20. Generative AI poses global challenges that require international coordination. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has a proven track record of helping the world adapt to technological change.
21. S.A.C. urges the Canadian government to support an independent, expert-led WIPO study examining the impacts of GenAI on music creators in order to:
- Gather data and best practices from around the world.
 - Encourage international consistency and fairness in AI regulation.
 - Provide guidance to policymakers balancing innovation and creator protection.
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Conclusion

22. Canada's songwriters are among the most respected and innovative in the world and contribute significantly to Canada's economy and cultural identity. Yet their livelihoods and the sustainability of their creative contributions are at risk from unregulated Generative AI practices.

23. To preserve Canada's cultural sovereignty and ensure that **innovation benefits all**, the Songwriters Association of Canada calls on policymakers to:

1. **Mandate transparency**
2. **Reject commercial TDM exceptions**
3. **Support licensing-based market solutions.**
4. **Support an independent WIPO study**

24. By enacting these measures, Canada can remain both a leader in cultural innovation and a defender of creator rights — ensuring that technology serves humanity, and not the other way around.

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