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*CRTC license renewal pending*

## CKDU offers an alternative voice



by Ryan Stanley

Anyone who's listened to CKDU-FM knows the station sounds different. No Top-40, no indistinguishable DJs recycling cheesy quips, no advertising that threatens to overpower news and music.

If many of their staff and volunteers had their way, the station would sound more different still. They call themselves Dalhousie's 'campus-community' radio station, and they take the second part of that label seriously.

What they also take seriously, however, is the task of ensuring that their license to broadcast is safely renewed this December. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the federal body which regulates the broadcast airwaves, may ask CKDU to appear before a public hearing in Fredericton, New Brunswick on December 7. The renewal process is one through which all broadcasters must pass periodically, and if successful, could permit the station to go about its business for as long as seven years before the next renewal is required.

Once that hurdle is past, Sara Shields would like to see the station branch out into different areas of the community. Shields is CKDU's Community Affairs Liaison, and is working to open the station to people who aren't often heard on the radio. She has spoken with seniors and First Nations people, for example. She said the Black United Front is preparing to air a weekly current affairs show, and pointed to a show called "Telling it like it is", organized by the anti-poverty group Humans Against Resource Deprivation (HARD), as a small step towards giving a voice to marginalized groups.

"Radio is intimate and public," she says. "It works for a community that's underrepresented. It can serve to allow people within that community to talk to each other... and to move that community forward."

Still, Shields sets her goals high. She says she has come up against the very obstacles she's trying to help overcome. "The irony," she says, "is that the people who are underrepresented in the mainstream media are the people who are the most stretched", and lack the time and resources to produce a radio program. She said this reality has required a flexible approach on the

part of the station.

In the meanwhile, others at CKDU are preoccupied with preparing for the licensing hearings. Public hearings are not uncommon when stations seek to renew their broadcast licenses. They can be sparked by complaints, however, and CKDU has always received its share of critical reaction from Halifax listeners. The problem is the station's commitment to providing alternatives to the programming available on commercial stations, and the fact that this programming — whether discussion of controversial or cutting-edge issues or simply non-mainstream music — sometimes rubs people the wrong way.

According to the notice from the CRTC informing CKDU of the public hearing, the commission wants to discuss "the implementation of guidelines for broadcast of potentially objectionable material".

Chris Trowbridge, Program Director at CKDU, thinks shocking material on the radio sometimes serves a useful purpose. "I think that there are times when it's important that people's perceptions are challenged," he says. "We've done some really good work that way, with gay and lesbian programming, and we've introduced contemporary black music to the airwaves in Halifax, with rap and hip-hop programming that no one else will touch. That's really important cultural expression that doesn't get a voice somewhere else."

Jo-Ann Citrigno, CKDU's Station Manager, doesn't downplay the CRTC's seriousness, but doesn't expect the hearing to censure CKDU's approach. "The commercial station does what everyone expects, they play by all the rules, because they want to make money, and that's their bottom line," she says. "We're pushing the other way, and I think the CRTC likes that, they like the creativity." She also says the CRTC favours campus-community stations for the support they typically give to local Canadian music talent.

According to Trowbridge, the station is currently revising its programmers' guide, and hopes to clarify the procedures for responding to complaints, in accordance with the CRTC's guidelines. He said the station had also received numerous letters of support from listeners.

## Student aid 1993: more loans, more frustration

by Cheryl Way

The jury is still out on whether changes to the student aid program in Nova Scotia are benefiting students who apply for financial help to attend colleges and universities.

"It's tough because everyone has to make the decision if they're going to come back to university. They might get the money to do so via a loan," says Jefferson Rappell, DSU President. "They have to keep in mind that each year they are building up a student loan debt."

The new system of student aid in Nova Scotia allows for students to borrow more money from the government. However, bursaries are no longer available. The Nova Scotia Student Loan (NSSL) is the new alternative to the old bursary system.

Shelly McCulley, a first-year pharmacy student, thinks that the new all-loan system will keep people from misusing government funds. "People who are really in need won't abuse the system," she says. "They know it will mean more loans to pay back."

In previous years, students could get up to \$105 per week of study from Canada Student Loans and \$71 a week from the Nova Scotia bursary program. The new NSSL program means that students can now receive up to \$150 a week. For some students this change has meant going to school is financially easier.

"If they're going to give it [money] to you, they may as well give you a lot," says Andy Thompson, a journalism student at King's College. "The worst thing a student can do is worry about money

when they are going to school. They shouldn't have to worry about money."

But Thompson did have to worry in September when clerical errors made by the Student Assistance Office meant his loan was late arriving. "They wrote back and said I would have to send more information about the Veteran's Pension I was receiving," he says. "They made a big mistake. I don't know how they could figure a student is on a pension—a veteran's pension for that matter."

Yet according to Fay Lee, from the Student Assistance Office, such glitches are uncommon. "The system is working smoothly," she says. "We haven't yet reached the end of the first year of operation so it's a little early to give a full assessment, [but] it's working smoothly from the De-

partment of Education's point of view."

Lee added that mistakes made on students' applications often cause problems. The four most common errors students make are failing to submit supporting documents like income tax returns, failing to declare investments, and not verifying work term earnings or a work term's job search.

In September, the Student Assistance Office answered an average of 228 calls a day. There were 412,447 attempts to reach the office, but 406,862 of those callers received a busy signal. A new toll-free number and touch-tone response system is in place, allowing students to check on the status of their application 24 hours a day. Despite this technological effort, the office phones still appear to be bearing the brunt of student frustration.