



-- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

## Ups and Downs for Campus Radio funding

Effects of the recession only one factor in the challenge of sustaining community-based radio

Ottawa, 20 November, 2009 -- Campus radio stations offer many benefits to campus life, and campus and community radio is as relevant and vital as ever. But communicating that value to students and universities is a big job.

The results are mixed: On the downside, SoundFM (CKMS 100.3 FM U of Waterloo) recently lost a campaign to restore their student levy to just \$2.50/term, after losing their student funding the previous year in a contentious referendum. That was a blow that amounted to more than 75% reduction in their operating budget.

Steve Krysak is President of SoundFM and his team are working on their options. Says Krysak: "Without financial support from our campus we have been forced to make severe cutbacks and drastic changes to our operations. This latest blow has made it much harder to keep producing quality programming for our community."

All the while, every station is facing the rising costs of training, personnel, equipment, services, and every aspect of running a radio station.

On the upside, most campus stations can still rely on steady support from their student body. For instance, Simon Fraser University students voted last year to increase their annual levy for CJSF (90.1 FM SFU, Burnaby). CJSW (90.9 FM U of Calgary) is also thriving -- after years of planning and saving up, they have just completed building their new studios. (See details at <http://www.cjsw.com/>). In other demonstrations of local support, CJAM (99.1 FM U of Windsor) and CKCU (93.1 FM Carleton U, Ottawa) both recently surpassed their goals for community donations in their on-air pledge drives.

The reasons for universities, including students, to support campus radio are many: the value of a station goes far deeper than what is heard on the air. Programming content, to be sure, is valuable -- and costly to create, even using volunteers. But also, stations create promotional and visibility opportunities for the university and student groups, skills training and networking for students, and grassroots connections to the wider community. Beyond this, campus radio stations provide support for emerging artists and new ideas, local news and information, and a vital role in local community development. Campus and community broadcasters are also the only broadcasters mandated to provide public access to the airwaves.

Currently, the CRTC is reviewing their Community and Campus radio policies. The NCRA and partners are working to build up a national funding mechanism for campus and community radio. All this while seeking regulatory changes to support stations' work.

Even once we're successful in these avenues, the role of the university community is still going to be the primary one for funding campus radio.

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National Campus and Community Radio Association  
L'Association nationale des radios étudiantes et communautaires

Charlotte Bourne, NCRA President explains: "We do need to develop more diverse funding opportunities for campus and community stations, because our mission gets more and more expensive and we need to be strong and stable as a sector. But listener support is still a core value, and we will always have to rely on community donors -- the people who know first-hand what we're providing to communities."

On campuses, that means students: Campus stations work best when supported by a reasonable levy on student fees (preferably indexed to inflation), in recognition of the training and opportunities they provide to students, as well as local cultural support and programming, and their role in enriching campus life.

Community-owned and operated, not-for-profit, listener-supported radio is surviving in the face of many challenges, but it is vulnerable in many places. In light of changes and cutbacks in the private broadcasting sector and CBC/Radio-Canada, its mandate is more important than ever.

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