

MUSIC PEI AGM
August 12, 2025
Executive Director Report
Submitted by Rob Oakie

These past few years have been challenging, no doubt about it. We had 2 years of significant losses in 2023 and 2024 which made a large dent in Music PEI's retained earnings that had been accumulated over about 15 years. Fortunately, 2025 was much better and helped to re-stock the cupboards a bit. My goal was always to have at least enough retained earnings to cover salaries and rent for at least one year in case the worst happens.

Add to that the recent reductions in funding from FACTOR, one of our 3 primary funders, along with the tremendous competition for funding for other national funders like Canadian Heritage and Canada Council. There are more and more organisations applying for financial assistance and success or approval rates are falling yearly.

Creative PEI recently released a study showing the contributions to the Culture industries and communities across Canada and compared provinces. PEI did not fare well and was at the bottom of the list per-capita. But, the figures were not 100% accurate as it did not capture contributions from Innovation PEI, the business development arm of the province and also the department that Music PEI and other creative industries get most of their funding. Even with these adjustments, we are still below the average. This is something that the creative industries will have to lobby hard for an increase to keep us competitive with the other provinces.

Over the years we have seen the Music PEI annual operating budget start out at just over \$150,000 in 2008 to a projected budget of over \$900,000 for 2025/26 fiscal year. Three things have remained constant, Showcase PEI, Music PEI Week and Awards and the Music PEI Investment Program. There have also been a multitude of projects, some recurring, some one time only, that Music PEI has delivered.

This past fiscal year has included an impressive cohort of programs and activities as we work to support our members at each level of their career. It is important to keep in mind that Music PEI is a music industry association. Our goal and mandate have always been to provide aid and support to artists and music industry professionals to develop sustainable careers. We are not a community organisation although we do try to engage the community when we can. We have limited resources and need to keep focus on our primary goals.

Having said that, programs like the Ripple Effect and Know Better, Do Better, both the brainchildren of Programs Manager Andy Glydon, are important, much needed and vital programs. Both address systemic issues in our industry/community that need to be addressed. These programs will help to improve safety for our members, a key goal.

Every time I write an annual report for Music PEI, I am always blown away by what a small team can accomplish. When all of the programs and activities are listed and documented it is hard to believe we accomplished all of that.

We took a big step this past year and hired Shannon Smith as our Finance Manager. It was a game changer to create that new position and bring our bookkeeping in-house. Shannon brings with her years of experience in money management and bookkeeping skills, and just happens to be one of the biggest music fans I've met! Shannon has spent the past year setting up new systems to make us more efficient and productive and allow us to track our financial status in real time.

Andy Glydon continues to do an exceptional job as Programs Manager and has taken our programs to the next level. The Investment Program has been completely revamped to better service our members. Golden Ticket and Diverse Voices are 2 of the best recording programs in the country. We know this from firsthand feedback and comments from music industry professionals from across Canada and around the globe.

Of course, we would not be able to accomplish all of this without tremendous support since day one from Skills PEI. Since 2008, through the Work Experience PEI program, Music PEI has employed close to 100 people to help us deliver Showcase PEI, the Canadian Song Conference and Music PEI Week. Most of these folks who have worked here through Skills have been musicians. I can often go to a music event on the Island and point out dozens of musicians who have come through our doors and made amazing contributions to our music community and Music PEI.

And this past year was no different. In 2024/25, Music PEI employed an amazing team. We have been exceptionally lucky to hire Dylan Menzie to lead the Skills PEI team. At times there have been 6 temporary staff in the corner office and Dylan has led them with spirit! Under his direction, Music PEI had another very successful Music PEI Week, Canadian Song Conference and Showcase PEI.

Major Events

First up in 2024 was the Canadian Song Conference. Prior to Dylan coming on as Team leader, Alicia Toner led the team through this event. The Skills staff hired for CSC 2024 Nick Doneff and Jena MacIsaac, and they did an outstanding job, shout out to them! 20 delegates from across Canada, the US and UK were recruited. As usual they included music supervisors, sync agents, publishers, labels and PRO's.

20 artists participated in the Listening Sessions with 8 of them paired to participate in the Canadian Songwriter Challenge. 4 of these artists were from across Canada co-wrote and recorded new songs with their PEI counterparts. These new songs were then presented to the delegates on the last day of CSC. 4 established producers were hired to work with them. The conference also included workshops and panels focused on career development and creating a sustainable career through multiple revenue streams. A full

Final Report can be found [here](#). Funding for CSC was provided by Innovation PEI, ACOA, FACTOR (through the Government of Canada and Canada's Private Radio Broadcasters).

Dylan was hired in July of 2024 and dove straight into Showcase PEI. Skills staff hired for that event were Sam Langille and Harry Bruce.

This was the 17th edition of Showcase PEI, and the focus is 100% on developing live performance opportunities. Targeted delegates are festival, event and venue programmers, agents and promoters. 12 international delegates from the US, UK and Australia joined 15 Canadian delegates. 25 PEI artists and one UK artist performed. Lawrence Maxwell was paired with Robbie Cavanagh (UK) for the international Artist Exchange Program. Music PEI started the AEP in 2012, and this year partnered with English Folk Expo and we hope for many years to come. As part of the agreement, Lawrence Maxwell showcased at the English Folk Expo conference in Manchester in March 2025. The duo also played a couple of shows after the conference in the UK and hope to continue to work together. You can find a full Final Report on Showcase PEI [here](#).

Music PEI Week 2025 included a new partnership with the city of Summerside. Mayor Dan Kutcher and his team welcomed Music PEI Week and provided support. It had been a while since Music PEI engaged in a meaningful way with Summerside and our hope it is just the beginning of bigger things to come. We brought the SOCAN Songwriter of the Year Concert back to Summerside for the first time in many years. The whole event was a great success with shows in Summerside, Charlottetown and Montague. We were fortunate to have created surplus revenue which supports Music PEI's ongoing activities. The Final Report for Music PEI Week 2025 can be found [here](#). The Music PEI Week team included Andrew Cormier and Andrea Medina.

Export Development

Export Development has always been a key plank of Music PEI's mandate and 2024/25 was no exception. Along with the 2 inbound events, Showcase PEI and Canadian Song Conference, Music PEI also attended select outbound events in order to present and assist PEI artists in developing new markets. These projects included:

- Reeperbahn, Germany: Once again Music PEI partnered with CIMA and sent 2 artists to Reeperbahn, Logan Richard and Tara MacLean. The CIMA partnership includes onsite support and pre-event networking sessions.
- Americana UK, London: This was Music PEI's 4 time to showcase at AMA-UK and a continued partnership with CIMA. Music PEI has reduced the total number of artists at AMA-UK from 6 5 years ago to 2 in 2025. The 2 artists selected to rep Music PEI were The East Pointers and Logan Richard. The partnership included a pre-event networking session with UK industry professionals and one on one meetings.
- ECMA, Charlottetown: With the event back on home turf, multiple PEI artists were awarded showcases, something not reflected in St John's the following year). 28 artists received 41 showcases. Music PEI also sponsored/hosted a luncheon for the Export Buyers and introduced many of the showcasing PEI artists during the lunch.

A new CEO was hired just prior to the event which unfortunately turned into a disaster. In my opinion, the new CEO did not respect the past history of the organisation and its many accomplishments and was intent on revamping a system that had some flaws but was very successful at its goal of advancing the careers of East Coast artists and industry. PEI was woefully underrepresented at the event in St. John's this past year with only 3 official showcases, something that cannot happen again. The 4 Atlantic MIAs have come together to meet with ECMA and discuss a potential realignment that would include the MIAs as full partners. These discussions are ongoing but hopefully will have positive results in the near future.

- Folk Alliance, Montreal: Music PEI partnered with the Atlantic MIA collective to present an Atlantic Spotlight showcase at FAI. This model works well and will likely be the format for future outbound showcases. It generally results in better representation and more opportunities. The 3 PEI artists with official showcases were Dennis Ellsworth, Tara MacLean and Inn Echo.
- English Folk Expo, Manchester UK: Music PEI established the Artist Exchange Program and in 2024 partnered with English Folk Expo to pair Lawrence Maxwell with Robbie Cavanagh. Robbie attended Showcase PEI 2024 and the 2 co-wrote and showcased at the event. In March 2025, Max travelled to Manchester and once again co-wrote and showcased with Robbie. They followed that with a short tour of 3 additional dates (all sold out) in the region, which was organised by a 2024 Showcase PEI delegate, Kate Lynch.

Export Development has changed over years. When Music PEI began, the US was a main focus when it came to export. In the past few years, things have certainly changed. Visa fees began to rise significantly and added to this the predatory attitude the current US president has towards Canada's sovereignty and stories of border crossing woes, the US has become a lot less desirable. With that in mind Music PEI has been focusing more on domestic opportunities and to continue to develop UK and European markets. In light of this, Music PEI will not attend US conferences, at least for 2025/26, but we will continue to support artists who choose to develop the market. Hopefully flight costs for Australia will become more reasonable and we can continue to recruit delegates from there. Aside from the flight costs, Australia has been an excellent export market for many of our artists including The East Pointers, The Burning Hell, Inn Echo, Catherine MacLellan and more.

Professional Development

Andy Glydon has done an outstanding job as Programs Officer and kept our programs current and responsive to the needs of our members. Innovations to Golden Ticket, Diverse Voices, Taken Care of Business and of course the Investment Program have provided countless opportunities for artists and industry professionals to develop their careers.

Add to that many improvements and or total revamp of submission processes, assessment and adjudication, implementation of artist ratings, data collection and more have all contributed to an effective suite of programs and systems.

Special shout out to all the contractors who have provided incredible support, guidance, mentorship and knowledge to our programs and the participants. Colin Buchanan, Mathias Kom and Katrina Lopes are just a few of the many who have contributed. Andy has provided an in-depth report [here](#).

Funding

2024 marked the first time the **City of Charlottetown** contributed to Music PEI operations. They have been supporting Music PEI Week for a long time, but this new support had a tremendous impact to assist in supporting the day-to-day activities at MPEI. In 2024/25, Charlottetown contributed \$10,000 towards operations.

Music PEI pitched **Innovation PEI** for an increase in funding for this past fiscal year, it had been a while since we had seen a significant increase. The Province has been a tremendous supporter of Music PEI since 2008 and it is because of that initial funding that we are here. Andy Glydon put together an impressive presentation and we were successful in garnering a \$39,000 increase from the previous year. Innovation PEI contributed 284,000 which allowed much needed wage increases and an increase to our Investment Program, allowing for more grants to be distributed to our members. A full Final Report submitted to Innovation PEI can be found [here](#).

ACOA also provided an increase in funding for 2023/24 and 24/25 just saw status quo in funding, \$148,000. ACOA primarily provides funding for export and professional development projects. The ACOA Final Report detailing the projects covered by the funding can be found [here](#).

FACTOR has had a very rough year, and this will likely affect us for years to come. Since 2007, FACTOR has recognised Music PEI as an official provincial music association. As one, we receive an annual contribution towards operations, which now stands at \$40,000 annually. Along with the fixed contribution, FACTOR provides project support which changes from year to year.

During the summer of 2024, FACTOR had \$10,000,000 stolen from their bank account and it has yet to be recovered. Scotia Bank, FACTOR's bank, has refused to take responsibility and the money has left the country for multiple destinations around the world. It is in the courts now but could take years to resolve.

To add to the woes, the federal government cancelled a proposed Digital Services Tax that was to be in effect at the end of August this year. This money, billions, was partially earmarked for the Canada Music Fund, which is where FACTOR gets its funding.

Those 2 incidents could have long-term negative impacts on the financial support Music PEI receives in the future. In fact, it has already impacted our fiscal year 2025/26 as we have received a 20% cut from 2024/25. This has caused Music PEI to cancel 2 planned

export events to UK and Italy and reduce the number of delegates for Showcase PEI this year.

It makes securing private funding/sponsorship even more important. We have had recent success with sponsorship from RBC and TD for Golden Ticket and Diverse voices respectively. Music PEI has also been successful in securing funding from Canada Council and the Provincial Government for Ripple Effect and Know Better Do Better as well as Canadian Heritage for Export Development. We will continue to search for new funding and revenue opportunities and diversify as much as possible.

Shannon Smith's finance report for the AGM can be found [here](#).

Summary

2024/25 fiscal year has been a very exciting and interesting one. We are seeing new artists blossom and artists who have been around for a while take the next steps. SOPA has of course continued to be instrumental in developing new artists that have graduated through the program and are now a big part of PEI's music community. And the community is now more diverse than it has ever been. It is truly an exciting time to be part of this amazing community.

This report just skims the surface of Music PEI's activities during the past fiscal year. It does not begin to cover the countless meetings with partners, exploring new opportunities for our members, attending industry conference calls, advocacy work for our industry, constant research and outreach. Music PEI continues to offer career advice, mentorships and more to support our members. Music PEI has also improved our data collection and storage systems, created new processes and now have an excellent history saved for future reference.

For the past couple of years, I have been part of a national group, ACCORD, who have been lobbying the federal government over things like copyright legislation, royalties and creating legislation to force the digital platforms to contribute meaningfully to the Canadian music ecosystem.

It is clear that the Canadian Government needs to reassess how it contributes to and protects, our music industry. The major labels and DSPs are, as always, focused on their own bottom lines. Music is just a product to be monetised, no different from truck, with the major difference being, they don't have to build it. Artists willingly contribute their music, essentially for free, to these platforms. It will require a strong-willed government to create new legislation that could change the landscape and give a much-needed boost to Canada's music industry, much like CRTC did way back in 60s.

I believe it will become even more crucial to increase support from the provincial government as well as looking for new opportunities. There is no question about the contribution of PEI's music industry to the overall health of the province, both financially

and to its citizens overall health. The tourism industry relies so heavily on the local entertainment factor and the contribution to our GDP is massive.

The music biz is an industry made up of a huge number of self-employed entrepreneurs who toil each day to develop their careers and invest in PEI. As an example, economic spinoffs from Music PEI's Investment Program result in more than 3 times private sector investment and spending.

Music PEI Week alone results in at least \$300,000 in economic spinoff for the community as does Showcase PEI and CSC.

These are all compelling reasons for increased Provincial Investment.

Retirement Announcement

As a final note to this report, I am announcing publicly my retirement. I have advised the MPEI Board and staff I will be stepping down as the Executive Director of Music PEI on Friday the 13th of March 2026, one day shy of my 70th birthday. It seemed an appropriate time.

I can honestly say without reservation, this has been the best and most rewarding job of my lifetime. I have taken so much joy and pride watching our artists step onto world class stages, have their music used in countless films and TV shows and tour across Canada and around the globe. Knowing Music PEI has played a significant part in many of our top artists' career development through our events, programs and funding keeps the job exciting.

As a founding member of Music PEI, I want to once again acknowledge two people in particular for helping to get this organisation started. Lloyd Doyle and Grady Poe were the only two artist managers on PEI in the early 2000s. They were also board members of the Prince Edward Island Music Awards Association while I was the President. They made me aware of something I did not know, that PEI was the only province in Canada that did not have a provincial music industry association.

Together the 3 of us lobbied government for the better part of 2 years to little success. Many proposals were written and re-written. Sensing our frustration with the lack of progress, another board member, Gordon Belsher, offered to set up a meeting with then premier, Pat Binns. He just happened to be his neighbour. That 20-minute meeting resulted in a commitment for \$150,000 for our first year. Grady and Lloyd taught me what I needed to know about the music industry, and we were off and running. Shelley Nordstrom has also been a tremendous mentor and assisted in MPEI's growth along the way.

The founders of the PEI Music Awards Association also deserve huge recognition! In 2001 a group of likeminded people got together in Summerside to create the first PEI music awards event. They saw development happening in Nova Scotia's music industry and felt

PEI deserved an awards program. The first year was held at the Harbourfront Theatre in Summerside. The founding directors included Wayne Walsh, Blaine Corckum, Charlie Hansen, Bob Stright and Brian Dawson.

Over the years, there have been countless staff, board members, partners, funders and contributors, too many to mention. Suffice to say it has taken a village. We have an organisation, and a community we can all be proud of and one that is respected internationally. There is nothing more gratifying than hearing from international industry professionals that we have something very special here on PEI, and it happens regularly.

The future is bright and opportunities countless for Music PEI and our members. Personally, I would like to see more Artist Exchanges happen in more countries around the globe. I believe they are tremendous opportunities for our artists to collaborate with international artists and develop new markets and opportunities. So far we have had exchanges with England, Wales, Denmark and Sweden, but the opportunities and possibilities are endless.

I feel very confident in the future of the organisation. The Board of Directors has been an excellent source of wisdom and guidance, with a special shoutout to Nikki Waite for her passionate commitment and leadership this past 6 years. These folks serve on our board as volunteers and make a significant commitment of time and energy, we could not do it without them.

The Board has set up a solid succession plan and has left little to chance. Documentation, systems, policies and procedures are well now documented and saved, and we have an amazing and committed staff and team.

Six more months to go. It will certainly be a mixture of emotions, but I know this organisation will continue to shine and provide our music community with the tremendous support it has become known for.

Rob Oakie
Executive Director
Music PEI