

Quebec rap group loses \$18,000 grant because their mostly French lyrics had too much English

Description

MONTREAL — Their new album was in the can, but this being Quebec, one more task awaited Dead Obies: counting the lyrics to determine how many words were in French.

The result — 55 per cent French, 45 per cent English — meant the group of 20-something francophone rappers from Montreal's South Shore would lose an \$18,000 grant they had been awarded by Musicaction, a foundation that distributes federal government and radio industry money to emerging francophone artists.

Under a 30-year-old Musicaction rule, only records with 70 per cent francophone content are eligible for the grants, so Dead Obies were obliged to return a \$9,000 payment that helped fund the recording and forego the \$9,000 balance.

Source: [bonsound.com](#)

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And because the equivalent anglophone grants, administered by FACTOR, are available to performers who have no more than 50 per cent French lyrics, the 55-per-cent-French Dead Obies are ineligible for them as well.

Dead Obies member Jean-François Ruel said he has trouble complaining about a lost grant when he sees governments cutting vital social programs.

But the subsidies are crucial for young artists, he said, and the rules that determine Dead Obies are not true francophone performers seem out of touch with modern Quebec.

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His group, which plays bars in Trois-Rivières and Saint-Hyacinthe, hardly deserves to be lumped in with a group like Simple Plan, Montreal francophones who sell out large theatres worldwide singing in English.

“I think the way that Quebec culture is going to preserve itself and not be swallowed by the mass Internet culture and American culture is by staying on point and staying modern and giving support to the new generation that is doing things another way,” Ruel said. “We still carry the French tradition.”

Give a f— si tu m’aimes pas, j’suis so over it.

Musicaction said the 70 per cent threshold is a “historic rule” that furthers its mission of developing francophone music in Canada.

The federal Department of Canadian Heritage, which provides more than half of the \$8.4-million distributed annually by Musicaction, said in an emailed statement that the foundation operates “independently from the government” and has full freedom to set eligibility requirements.

The last word goes to Ruel, a.k.a. Yes McCan, who in Gesamtkunstwerk’s opening track declares a moment of silence for the haters and says he doesn’t care if they don’t like him. “Give a f— si tu m’aimes pas, j’suis so over it,” he raps, a sentence that at roughly 54 per cent French would not qualify for a grant

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