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Litmag editors scramble for alternate funding

August 11, 2009 | 7:15 PM | By Suzanne Gardner

As was [reported last week](#), the Department of Canadian Heritage has unequivocally confirmed that it will no longer fund magazines with annual circulation figures of less than 5,000. In a recent letter to *The New Quarterly* managing editor Rosalynn Tyo, minister of Canadian Heritage James Moore stated that the circulation minimum will not be repealed, and that magazines falling below this threshold will not be given any special treatment.

Prior to Moore's letter, small magazines across the country were rallying to oppose the move through petitions, a Facebook group, letter-writing campaigns, and awareness advertising in the magazines themselves. Now, however, many litmag staffers are reluctantly admitting that minister Moore's latest statement seems definitive. "My impression when I read the letter was that it was a final decision," explains Tyo. "As far as I'm concerned, I think it's probably over... unfortunately."

In response to the impending shortfall, several litmags are now looking for alternate sources of funding. Jeanette Lynes, co-editor of *The Antigonish Review*, says that her magazine “could face a serious situation” if one of its other primary funders, St. Francis Xavier University, is not able to pick up the slack. Others, such as Alberta’s *Filling Station*, are looking at diversifying funding sources through a combination of grants, fundraising activities, donations, and marketing initiatives, according to managing editor Laurie Fuhr.

The editors of *Prairie Fire* and *Matrix*, meanwhile, say they will probably need to scale back operations by reducing payments to authors and editors, and by publishing smaller-sized issues. “From the point of view of our magazine or any other that [previously] received Canadian Heritage support, they’ve created this dependency and now they’re basically withdrawing it and leaving us with no way to make it up,” said Andris Taskans, editor of *Prairie Fire*. “In that sense, it’s a bit of a cruel joke.”

Under the new funding regime, litmags are still eligible for the \$1.5-million Business Innovation fund, which is aimed at magazines with limited access to capital. Although this fund has no circulation requirement, it is still a small fraction of the CPF’s total annual budget and is unlikely to fully compensate for the shortfall these magazines will face come April.

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