

NEWS

Get tough on payola

By Cecelia Campbell-Livingston

Monday, September 02, 2013

AN executive of the Broadcast Commission of Jamaica (BCJ) says the organisation has urged government to take strong action against journalists guilty of involvement in payola.

Karlene Salmon, the BCJ's assistant executive director made the disclosure last Wednesday during a forum hosted by the Jamaica Association of Composers, Authors and Publishers (JACAP) at Knutsford Court Hotel.



She used the recent experience of a St Thomas Technical High School student to stress the dangers of pay-for-play.

According to Salmon, the student, an aspiring singer, saved enough money to record his song then took it to a Kingston radio station.

"He was told that the song sounds good, but he would need to fork out \$50,000 for it to be in rotation for a week!"

Salmon believes there are similar stories in the Jamaica entertainment industry. She says the BCJ – regulatory body for electronic media — has recommended that payola be made a criminal act with harsh penalties for offenders.

Its recommendations to government include mandatory playlists at radio stations and substantial fines for media bosses who turn a blind eye to their staff accepting money music interests.

"Payola is a problem and we feel that it contributes to the decrease in the variety of music. New talent is potentially stifled because upcoming artistes cannot get airplay, because they cannot afford to pay," she said.

The JACAP forum saw speakers from different areas of the music industry addressing issues such as copyright, publishing and more Jamaican music played on local radio.