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**DRAMA SPENDING HITS SEVEN-YEAR LOW  
TIME TO INVEST IN A TRUE CANADIAN VOICE**

Banff, Alberta – Spending on Canadian television drama has plummeted since 1999, with 2004 recording the lowest level in seven years, says the Coalition of Canadian Audio-Visual Unions (CCAU).

“Drama spending by Canada’s English-language private broadcasters bottomed out at \$53.6 million in 2004 from a high of \$73 million in 1998 – and that’s despite CTV’s regulated drama spending under its transfer benefits,” said Peter Murdoch, co-chair of the CCAU.

“Something has to be done to stop this downward slide, so we commissioned a report to find out what the English-language conventional broadcasters’ advertising revenues are projected to be for the next four years. It turns out their revenues are set to rise by more than \$200 million by 2008. Obviously, they can afford to meet their obligations to Canadians by spending more on high-quality indigenous drama.”

The CCAU released its report, *The Need for a Regulatory Safety Net*, at the 2005 Banff World Television Festival. The study calls for regulations to guarantee a minimum level of Canadian drama on our public airwaves.

“Broadcasters benefit from a protected market and reap huge profits from U.S. simulcasts. They have been shirking their obligations for too long. That’s why we recommend that English-language private broadcasters be required to spend a minimum of 7% of their gross ad revenues on Canadian drama. This would more than double their spending on Canadian drama – from \$53.6 million in 2004 to \$131 million in 2008,” said Pamela Brand, National Executive Director & CEO, Directors Guild of Canada.

“History has shown us that private broadcasters won’t produce Canadian drama unless they’re forced to,” said Stephen Waddell, ACTRA’s National Executive Director. “They’ve used the CRTC’s 1999 policy as a licence to print money. It’s time the CRTC put private broadcasters back on the hook and re-impose long overdue regulations to require the private broadcasters to invest in Canadian jobs and culture.”

Drama plunged into a crisis in 1999 when the CRTC expanded the definition of priority programming to include cheaper fare, such as variety shows and entertainment magazine programs. In November, 2004, the CRTC introduced advertising incentives to entice broadcasters to produce and air more Canadian drama, but it’s unclear whether these incentives will have any effect, so the CCAU is calling for a safety net of mandatory broadcaster spending on drama.

“The government has let business interests control television policy for the last 40 years. It’s time the CRTC answered to the people of Canada. We have a right to see our own culture reflected on the public airwaves,” said Maureen Parker, Executive Director, Writers Guild of Canada. “Broadcasters’ licences are coming up for renewal in two years. That’s a great opportunity for the CRTC to put things right by adopting the 7% minimum and boosting Canadian drama to where it belongs.”

The CCAU is a coalition of 10 Canadian audio-visual unions. *The Need for a Regulatory Safety Net* was commissioned by the following CCAU members: the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC), the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians, Local 700 CEP (NABET), and the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC). The other members of the CCAU are the American Federation of Musicians – Canada (AFM-Canada), Union des artistes (UdA), the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), Association des réalisateurs et réalisatrices du Québec (ARRQ), Association Québécoise des techniciens de l’image et du son (AQTIS), and Société des auteurs de radio, télévision et cinéma (“SARTEC”).

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