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New Broadcasting Policies Good for Canadian Consumers

Toronto – October 31, 2008 – The Writers Guild of Canada commends the CRTC for its decision yesterday to uphold a strong regulatory framework supporting the creation of and access to a diverse offering of Canadian programming.

“The CRTC heard the cable companies’ calls for ‘market forces,’ says Maureen Parker, Executive Director, Writers Guild of Canada, “and responded by repeating that it cannot come at the expense of a truly Canadian industry. Their decision is about giving consumers choice – and central to that is the ability to choose from readily available Canadian programming and services.”

The CRTC decision pointed to the “significant market power” of the cable and satellite companies and the financial health of their industry, noting that their requests for deregulation were contrary to the *Broadcasting Act* and not in the interests of Canadian consumers.

The WGC applauds the CRTC’s decision to maintain guaranteed access rules for certain analog and pay/specialty services. Guaranteed access generates reliable subscriber revenues, meaning we can look to these services to be reliable sources of Canadian drama.

“Consolidation has harmed our industry,” added Parker, “leaving fewer doors for creators to knock on, and less original programming for consumers. Yesterday’s CRTC decision to uphold genre exclusivity recognizes this and provides an important counterbalance to the narrowing of the market. Protecting genre exclusivity as the CRTC has done will help ensure Canadian viewers are offered a diverse array of programming.”

The WGC also notes that two issues arising from the April proceedings will be treated in separate hearings to come. Deferred are considerations of the regulatory framework for Video-on-Demand (VOD) services, and the right of the BDUs to sell advertising on local avails. The WGC believes strongly that these new opportunities should support the production of Canadian drama, and we look forward to participating in these proceedings.

For more information, please contact David Kinahan, Writers Guild of Canada, at 416-979-7907 or 1-800-567-9974, or by email at d.kinahan@wgc.ca.

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents 1,900 professional English-language screenwriters across Canada. These are the talented people who create the distinctly Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our televisions, movie screens, radios and computers.