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CRTC's Two Streams for CTF an Unnecessary Complication

Toronto – June 5, 2008 – The CRTC today delivered its recommendations on the Canadian Television Fund (CTF) to the Department of Canadian Heritage. The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) is disappointed that the Commission felt it necessary to split the Fund into two streams with no clear distinction between them other than the source of the money.

“There was no evidence presented in the CRTC’s Task Force Report or the hearings in February that the CTF was not working,” says Maureen Parker, Executive Director, Writers Guild of Canada. “Now they’ve broken the Fund in two with no clear rationale. This introduces new layers of complication, duplication and bureaucracy into the Canadian TV production financing process – and all because cable companies like Shaw didn’t want to contribute to a system that has made them wealthy.”

The WGC is relieved that both streams of the Fund will continue to support only 10-point Canadian productions, but questions the “increased emphasis” on “audience success” of the so-called “private-sector fund.” Audience success was already a key criterion in the CTF model. And evidence indicates that those shows most distinctly Canadian – shows like *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, *The Rick Mercer Report* and *Corner Gas* – had the best success with Canadian audiences.

“As screenwriters,” says Rebecca Schechter, President, WGC, “audience success is always the goal whether we’re writing for the CBC or one of the private networks. Our objective in all cases is to make a show of the highest quality possible and to go after the largest audience possible. The recommendations create an artificial distinction for shows written for the private broadcasters.”

At the same time, the WGC applauds the CRTC’s decision to make mandatory the cable and satellite companies’ monthly contribution to the Fund. Shaw and Videotron’s withholding of their regulated CTF contribution created a crisis in Canadian television production.

“It was not their money to withhold in the first place,” adds Parker. “Shaw, Videotron and Rogers laid claim to public money, and the CRTC listened. This just goes to show that if you treat something as yours for long enough, people will start to believe it. And now, in order to close the loophole in the funding structure and give the cable companies something in return, they are introducing unnecessary complication into a system that didn’t need fixing in the first place.”

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 more than 1,800 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.