



**1999 Television Policy rears its ugly head once more
More money being spent on cheaper fare such as reality shows and U.S. drama**

For immediate release

March 29, 2007 – While private Canadian television broadcasters have long been spending more on foreign than Canadian drama, for the first time ever they are also spending more on inexpensive reality and entertainment programs.

According to new numbers from the CRTC, \$101 million was spent on reality TV, talk shows and entertainment programs such as *eTalk Daily* and *ET Canada* in 2005, while only \$71 million was spent on Canadian drama.

“This is another example of the 1999 Television Policy rearing its ugly head once again and forcing Canadian drama even farther to the back of the line,” says Maureen Parker, Executive Director of the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC). “When the definition of priority programming was expanded to include entertainment and reality shows, it was to help create a star system here in Canada and showcase Canadian talent, not to allow broadcasters to fill up their prime time schedules with cheaper programming.”

But when Canadians watch television, broadcasters know that drama is what they want to watch. Most of the top-rated programs in Canada each week are dramas.

Since ready-made American drama is cheaper to buy than producing homegrown drama, broadcasters are showing they will always go for the cheaper solution. In fact, private broadcasters are now spending almost seven times more on foreign drama than on Canadian – despite the ratings success of *Corner Gas* and *Little Mosque on the Prairie*.

“Private broadcasters operate in a regulated market that protects them from American competition. In return they are obligated to provide something different than the U.S. broadcasters – and that means high quality Canadian drama,” says Parker. “That’s why we have been asking the CRTC to put regulations in place to require broadcasters to spend a minimum of 7% of revenues on original English-language drama.”

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents more than 1800 professional screenwriters across Canada who create the distinctly Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our televisions, movie screens, radios and computers – such as dramatic TV series and movies, feature films, documentaries, animation programs, comedy and variety series, children’s and educational programming, radio drama, corporate videos and digital media productions.

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