



CRTC Group Licence Decision Cause for Concern

For Immediate Release – Toronto – July 27, 2011 – Despite today’s CRTC decision establishing a floor for Canadian Programming Expenditures (CPE) and spending on Programs of National Interest (PNI), the WGC remains concerned that the result may be even less quality Canadian drama for Canadian audiences than we have currently.

Maureen Parker, WGC Executive Director, says “it’s better to have this expenditure floor than no minimum at all. The 30% CPE is at the level we requested. But the PNI is well below our recommendation. We won’t really know what this figure means until we see how broadcasters spend, but we’re concerned about the potential impact on production in Canada. We will monitor carefully how these numbers play out on our screens, and work with the CRTC to ensure there is a real choice of quality Canadian drama.”

For Canada’s two major private broadcasters, Bell Media and Shaw Media, the level for spending on quality dramas, documentaries and awards shows has been set at 5% of revenues. The figure for PNI was to represent the broadcasters’ historical spending on this programming over the last three years. But the WGC questions the accuracy of the data on which this decision was based and has concerns about the transparency of the process.

Maureen Parker added that “based on our analysis of information we had access to prior to the public hearing, a 5% PNI was clearly not enough. But according to the CRTC, that data changed. However, we were never given access to new data, and broadcasters continued to shift the ground throughout the process with last-minute data submissions, re-classifications of programming and more manoeuvres geared to reducing their historical PNI. It seems to have worked for them. But whether it will work for Canadian audiences remains to seen.”

Jill Golick, WGC President, noted that “Canadian audiences want quality Canadian shows – they prove this with their remotes (and their mouse-clicks). We hoped this decision would mean more *Flashpoints*, more *Lost Girls*, more *Degrassis*. We don’t need a Canadian broadcast system to get more American programming; there are plenty of American broadcasters to provide that. If Canadian broadcasters don’t provide Canadian audiences with programming that is made specifically for them, then why do they exist?”

The WGC thanks the CRTC for rejecting many of the broadcasters’ calls for further flexibility – in broadcasters’ hands, that ‘flexibility’ has translated into less and less Canadian drama. The WGC also supports the Commission’s upholding of the policy to ensure genre diversity and the integrity of natures of service.

For more information, please contact David Kinahan, Writers Guild of Canada, at d.kinahan@wgc.ca

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents more than 2,000 professional English-language screenwriters across Canada. These are the creators who write the Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our televisions, movie screens and digital platforms.