



New Canadian Reality Show: Broadcasters Behaving Badly

For Immediate Release – Toronto – April 29, 2011 – The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) today urged the CRTC to require Canadian broadcasters to live up to their obligations to Canadian audiences, and stick to the TV Policy arrived at last year. The 2010 TV Policy created a balanced framework in which broadcasters received programming flexibility and a reduced exhibition requirement in return for guaranteed commitments to making quality Canadian programming, particularly Programs of National Interest (PNI) – dramas, documentaries and awards shows. The WGC filed its submission today as part of the reply phase of the CRTC's Licence Renewal hearing for private Canadian broadcasters.

WGC Executive Director Maureen Parker said "The WGC came into the licence renewal hearing respecting the terms of the new 2010 TV Policy, but the broadcasters did not. Instead they fiddled with their data in the midst of the hearing – adding some new, changing some old, with one of them going so far as to reclassify reality shows they had previously called docs – all to reduce their historical expenditure on PNI in order to reduce their future obligations. While broadcasters want to cherry-pick the TV Policy for the terms most favourable to them, they are working very hard to minimize any obligation to Canadian drama and docs. Yet that programming is the only thing that differentiates our broadcasters from the Americans."

To further their efforts to convince the CRTC to lower the expenditure requirement for PNI, broadcasters also made the outrageous suggestion that there is not the capacity in the production community to deal with increased demand.

Jill Golick, WGC President, noted that "we have a vibrant and growing talent pool of both experienced and emerging writers in this country – we're ready to do more. The Canadian production community was creating more hours of high-quality drama 10 years ago. You want to step it up? Just give us a willing partner and the greenlight."

Broadcasters have also resurrected their claim from past hearings that they can't make money from Canadian drama. But the WGC reminded the CRTC of the 2009 Nordicity report, "The Economics of Canadian Programming" – commissioned by the WGC, ACTRA and CMPA – which challenges this assertion, noting the shows can be and often are profitable. If Canadian broadcasters can't make money from shows like *Flashpoint* and *Rookie Blue* – which average 1.3 and 1.8 million viewers respectively – perhaps they are in the wrong business.

We urge the CRTC to maintain the 2010 TV Policy so long in the making. The intent of the policy was to create more Canadian drama and documentaries, not less. And if that means increased demand on Canadian talent, don't worry: we can handle it.

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 distinctly Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our televisions, movie screens and digital platforms.