



WGC says Broadcasters Playing Lowball in Licence Renewal

For Immediate Release – Toronto – February 10, 2011 – If private broadcasters have their way, Canadian audiences will be seeing even less quality Canadian programming and more U.S. reruns than they do now. So says the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) in its submission to the CRTC on Canadian broadcaster licence-renewal applications.

The WGC said that it is prepared to support the Canadian programming expenditure (CPE) of 30% of revenues proposed by the CRTC as part of the 2010 TV Policy - but noted that CTV, Shaw, Corus and Rogers should use this figure as a floor not a ceiling.

The CRTC also made part of the TV Policy framework a CPE for Programs of National Interest (PNI), like quality drama and documentaries. After reviewing the available data, the WGC determined that the appropriate level for this PNI CPE is 10% of revenues. This is the expenditure level necessary to ensure Canadian shows like *Flashpoint* don't disappear from our screens.

The WGC argued that the Commission's intent with the 2010 TV Policy decision was to give ownership groups increased flexibility with their expenditures and exhibition of Canadian programming across their stations, while at the same time, halting the decline of quality Canadian programming on our broadcasters. The policy was also intended to put a brake on the gross over-spending by Canadian broadcasters on U.S. programming. Their Canadian-last approach saw broadcasters spend more than 24 times more on foreign drama last year than they spent on Canadian drama.

WGC Executive Director Maureen Parker said "we've been waiting 12 years to remedy the damage done by the 1999 TV Policy. Last year the CRTC created a new TV policy which promises to restore a commitment to Canadian programming via expenditure requirements. We are now about to see the policy implemented through licence renewal proceedings this spring. The broadcasters however are still demanding flexibility in all of their regulatory obligations in order to minimize their responsibilities. In our experience "flexibility" is code for less Canadian. We look to the CRTC to enforce the intent of the TV policy and uphold the spirit of the Broadcasting Act. We want our Canadian TV."

The WGC also expressed its concern with "genre creep" – a diluting of the individual broadcasters' conditions of licence. Each service is trying to reduce exhibition requirements and weaken its nature of service. Showcase and Bravo!, for example, are asking to air more U.S. drama. This push toward the middle would make specialty channels a dumping ground for U.S. repeats.

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.

WGC President Jill Golick said "left to their own devices, Canadian private broadcasters have shown over and over that all they are interested in airing are reruns of U.S. programs. But Canadians get those shows already. We want specialty channels that really are special; that show our people, our values, our stories. Broadcasting is not a right. It is a privilege. It is time for our private broadcasters to live up to their responsibilities."

The WGC will present its case at the CRTC hearings in April, working to ensure that broadcasters live up to their obligations under the *Broadcasting Act* and provide Canadian audiences with the ability to choose from a variety of quality Canadian shows. To read the WGC submission, please visit www.wgc.ca.

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