



## Canadian Broadcasters are Nothing Without Canadian Programming

### For Immediate Release

**Gatineau** – May 07, 2009. The Writers Guild of Canada appeared today at the CRTC's licence renewal hearings for private over-the-air broadcasters. After several days of the broadcasters expressing their desire for 'flexibility' in the regulatory system, the WGC called on the CRTC to reassert the primary place of Canadian programming in the Canadian broadcasting system.

The WGC applauds the CRTC's recognition of the imbalance between broadcasters' spending on Canadian programming and American programming in its proposal of a 1 to 1 spending ratio. "We agree that the system is out of whack, with the ludicrous amounts these companies are spending on American programming," says Maureen Parker, Executive Director, WGC, "and we want to work with the CRTC to refine the 1 to 1 model. The last decade tells the tale: without specific regulation, broadcasters will not do local programming and they most certainly will not make the kind of high-quality Canadian shows that audiences want and deserve."

In 1998, private English OTA broadcasters spent 5.1% of their ad revenue (\$73 million) on Canadian drama. Last year, they spent just 3% of ad revenue (\$50 Million) on Canadian programming – and this included benefits spending from consolidation. Over those same years, the amount the English OTA broadcasters spent on foreign drama has increased, rising steeply in the last years as they entered into bidding wars with each other for American programming.

"There's no one with more skin in the game than the creative community," says Ms Parker. "In fact, since 1999, we've been played in the interests of flexibility - but we know now that 'flexibility' is just code for less Canadian in our broadcasting system."

The WGC requested that while the CRTC addresses the immediate issue of local programming, they hold the OTA broadcasters to 2008 expenditure levels on quality Canadian programming like drama. Ms. Parker added, "the status quo is still a loss for us, but let's save the complex policy issues for the 2010 hearings when we will have the time and facts to address them fully."

On this note, the WGC also called on the CRTC to require broadcasters to provide the disaggregated data necessary to making informed arguments about revenue and expenditure levels across station groups. Broadcasters have refused to provide the disaggregated data required for a full discussion of the issues instead focusing on immediate relief in the form of fee of carriage and reduced levels of Canadian content.

"Canadian programming, especially drama, has been getting the short end of the regulatory bargain, when it should be the very *raison d'être* of Canadian broadcasting," says Rebecca Schechter, President, WGC. "Without quality Canadian programming, the Canadian broadcasters are nothing but network affiliates of the American stations. If they'd prefer to just air U.S. programming, let's do away with their protections and subsidies, and we'll get the American shows directly from the U.S. sources."

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The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents 2,000 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.