



**WGC Solution to Put “Canadian” first in Canadian Broadcasting System...
Not Just in Name Only.**

For Immediate Release

Gatineau – September 15, 2009. The Writers Guild of Canada filed with the CRTC its position on TV policy in Canada and its ideas for a revised regulatory framework that will apply to the conventional and specialty broadcasters. This much needed policy review was supposed to take place in 2007, and we have been waiting patiently to redress the failures of previous TV policy adopted in 1999. The WGC has come together with ACTRA, the CFTPA and the DGC in proposing a plan to help the CRTC achieve its stated goal of “ensuring that the Canadian broadcasting system is distinctly Canadian in its content.”

To ensure that high-quality Canadian programming will be produced and in the volume necessary to provide audiences with real Canadian choice, the WGC is proposing a three-point plan. First, the WGC recommends a specific Canadian programming expenditure requirement for all conventional services. Second, it recommends the continuation of existing expenditure and exhibition requirements for specialty services. And finally, in order to address the serious decline in drama, true documentaries and children’s programming, the WGC recommends that the CRTC set ownership-group-based expenditure and exhibition requirements for drama, documentary and children’s programming.

“This three-point plan gets to the root of the problem,” says Maureen Parker, Executive Director, WGC, “by ensuring an overall Canadian programming spend for the conventional broadcasters and creating a minimum group-based expenditure requirement for drama. The plan expands on the Canadian Programming Expenditure (CPE) in use for specialty channels by adapting the model to the entire ownership group – this model has proven itself effective in generating high-quality, high-cost programs. The plan also recommends an exhibition requirement to ensure those shows are aired at least once on conventional broadcasters, where there is an opportunity to garner a mass audience. The history of Canadian broadcasting tells the tale: only with both expenditure *and* exhibition requirements do we get both volume and quality. This proposal gives broadcasters additional flexibility while ensuring they meet their obligations under the *Broadcasting Act*.”

Rebecca Schechter, President, WGC, notes that “when expenditure and exhibition requirements were lifted in 1999, it brought a growing Canadian industry to a hard stop. The decline was immediate and we’ve been waiting 10 years to address it. Canadian programming, especially drama, has been an afterthought for Canadian broadcasters, and it should be their very reason for being.”

To strengthen its economic argument in favour of Canadian drama, the WGC and its partners asked Nordicity to expand and refine its March 09 “Analysis of the Economics of Canadian Television Programming” study. The Nordicity analysis refutes broadcasters’ assertions that Canadian shows never make money and require indirect subsidization through their spending on U.S. programming. The analysis clearly demonstrates that Canadian programming is not always a loss leader and it can be and often is profitable. The report is evidence that the broadcasters cannot properly use Canadian programming as an excuse for overspending in Hollywood – Canadian programming can pay its own way.

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.

With the CRTC's recent decision to include fee-for-carriage in the November TV policy hearing, the WGC is very concerned that the key issue of content will be shunted to the sidelines. Parker added, "We've played by the rules and waited for this moment to address the decline in Canadian drama and the broadcasters' overspending in Hollywood. The monetary issue of fee-for-carriage is a fight between the broadcasters and the cable companies, with Canadian artists and Canadian audiences being held hostage."

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