



## **WGC Says CRTC TV Policy A Step in the Right Direction**

### **For Immediate Release**

**Toronto** – March 23, 2010. The CRTC released yesterday its decision setting forth the coming TV policy in Canada. With the re-introduction of expenditure requirements, the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) is optimistic, noting that it needs to do some modelling to determine if the spending requirements and drama minimums in the new policy are enough to make a real difference.

Maureen Parker, Executive Director, WGC, said that “the CRTC heard us. This policy marks a philosophical shift. The re-introduction of expenditure requirements will help build the supply of Canadian programming, including high-quality dramas and documentaries. And expenditure requirements will apply across the board to conventional and specialty services. Additionally, the elimination of priority programming will close a loophole that has allowed broadcasters to dodge producing high-quality drama. This is a step in the right direction.”

The WGC noted that this is a complicated decision. The WGC advocated for the move to group licensing because it more accurately reflects the broadcasting landscape. It remains to be seen whether the specific requirements for specific services will be enough to ensure that Canadians have a variety of high-quality Canadian shows. “There are questions we need to address,” added Parker. “Are the minimums high enough? Can this work without exhibition requirements? Is there too much flexibility here within each corporate group?”

The release last week of private broadcaster spending figures has made it even more clear why broadcasters cannot be trusted to produce high-quality Canadian drama without specific requirements. The CRTC data shows that, in 2009, spending on English-language Canadian drama by private broadcasters dropped by an industry-staggering 56%, while spending on foreign drama spiked by 16.8%. This Canadians-last approach means they spent more than 24 times on foreign drama what they spent on Canadian drama.

The value-for-signal fight has created a smoke screen around the fact that broadcasters and cable companies in Canada exist to provide a wide variety of Canadian programming to Canadians – that is the first condition of being part of the Canadian broadcasting system. “We already get all the American shows on the American networks,” says Rebecca Schechter, President, WGC. “Our broadcasting system must offer consumers something distinct – a clear and diverse choice of Canadian programming. They’ve been shirking this responsibility increasingly for the last decade. It’s time to make it a priority and put Canadians first.”

The true test of the policy’s effectiveness will come as it is applied at licence renewal hearings – now postponed to 2011. The WGC is very concerned that this delay will leave the industry to languish for at least another 18 months. “Broadcasters have done serious damage to the Canadian industry and a disservice to Canadian audiences. Another year or so of relying on their good intentions, and we’ll be trying to rebuild an industry from zero.”

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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.