



WGC tells Heritage Committee that Broadcasting in Canada is One System with Many Platforms

For Immediate Release – Ottawa – December 7, 2010 – The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) appeared today before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to discuss the effect of the vertical integration of media companies and the move to digital viewing platforms. The WGC noted that the evolution of media in Canada has resulted in a broadcasting system that exceeds the reach of the regulatory framework necessary to ensure the presence and quality of Canadian programming. The WGC urged the committee to think of broadcasting in Canada as one system with many platforms.

Changes in the ways content is being offered to Canadians are underlining inconsistencies and gaps in the regulatory framework. The WGC noted that digital platforms and ISPs are playing an increasing role in the way Canadian audiences are accessing entertainment, but these unregulated businesses have no obligation to program, promote or contribute to Canadian programming.

Maureen Parker, Executive Director, WGC, said, “the media landscape has changed but the faces look strangely familiar. The major Canadian players in the regulated space all have one foot firmly planted in the unregulated space. Yet they are calling for regulation of non-Canadian online services because of the threat of competition.”

As the audiences shift toward digital platforms, and the revenues shift toward ISPs, the Canada Media Fund will be increasingly squeezed. Sustained in large part by revenues from the regulated BDU operations, the CMF may well have less money to work with as the unregulated ISP portions of these converged businesses grow. The CMF is in the ironic position of being mandated to fund both television and digital content, helping drive revenues and build the businesses of unregulated digital platforms while ISPs have no reciprocal obligation to Canadian programming.

Jill Golick, President, WGC, noted that, “Canadian audiences don't think about regulated or unregulated platforms - they simply want to watch their favourite shows when and where they want. There's terrific opportunity here for Canadian stories to be told and Canadian talent to reach audiences in new ways. But we need an integrated vision of broadcasting in Canada, and a CRTC empowered to bring all the elements together to realize that vision.”

Parker added: “Regulation is not a dirty word. It's because of broadcaster regulation that we are able to enjoy such shows as *Flashpoint*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Rookie Blue*, *Heartland* and more. We need a similar framework for the digital platforms which are now an integral part of the system.”

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.