



Writers Guild of Canada

For immediate release

## **REGULATE BROADCASTERS TO SAVE CANADIAN TV**

September 28, 2006 – Over-the-air broadcasters like CTV, Global and CHUM should be required to spend a minimum of 7% of their advertising revenues on the production of Canadian drama, as well as more money on script and concept development.

Those are the recommendations made by the Writers Guild of Canada in an individual and joint submission with members of the Coalition of Canadian Audio-visual Unions to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) television policy review called by Canadian Heritage Minister Bev Oda in June.

“Even though this review only looks at broadcaster expenditures, it can help correct some of the damage done by the 1999 CRTC television policy which eliminated Canadian drama requirements for over-the-air broadcasters,” says Maureen Parker, Executive Director of the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC).

“Broadcasters have been saying they are too poor to spend money on Canadian programs even though their advertising revenue has risen by almost 15% over the past five years. If they are hurting, why have they increased the amount they spend on American programs by more than 8% while reducing their Canadian spend?”

The WGC is asking the English-language private broadcasters to spend a minimum of 7% of their advertising revenue on the production of Canadian drama. The percentage they have been spending decreased from 5.1 % in 1998 to 3.2% in 2005 – a steep decline that occurred even though CTV was forced to spend money on Canadian drama through a ‘benefits’ package required by a transfer of ownership.

But it takes more than money to capture eyeballs. At the upcoming broadcaster licence renewals the WGC will be asking the CRTC to allow less repeats in prime time and better scheduling and promotion of Canadian shows.

“When Global runs repeats of old shows like *Blue Murder* and *Train 48* as part of their Canadian content requirements, it’s no wonder no one is watching,” says Parker. “And over at CTV they aired their own version of *The O.C. – Whistler* – during the summer months when few Canadians were watching television, let alone a show about frolicking in the snow. It was then bumped around several times in the schedule with the final two episodes airing on a Friday night in August.”

This reduction in Canadian programming couldn’t come at a worse time.

“There are many issues affecting our country that we need to discuss – from our involvement in Afghanistan to the role public healthcare plays in our lives,” says Parker. “Television is the most accessible and affordable means of communicating with our fellow citizens, and high-quality Canadian dramas and comedies show us what it means to be Canadian by reflecting our history, values and sense of humour.”

You can access the WGC’s submission to the CRTC Television Policy Review at <http://www.wgc.ca/files/WGC%20OTA%20Submission%20CRTC%202006-5.pdf>

For more information please contact Barb Farwell, WGC Director of Communications at 416-979-7907, ext. 5234 or [b.farwell@wgc.ca](mailto:b.farwell@wgc.ca)

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents more than 1800 professional screenwriters across Canada who create the distinctly Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our television, movie screens, radio and computers – such as dramatic TV series and movies, feature films, documentaries, animation programs, comedy and variety series, children's and educational programming, radio drama, corporate videos and digital media productions.

-30-