



Writers Guild of Canada

For immediate release

WATERSHED MOMENT FOR THE CRTC TO SAVE CANADIAN TV

OTTAWA, December 4, 2006 – Canadian screenwriters travelled to Ottawa today to urge the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to save Canadian television by restoring Canadian drama expenditure requirements for over-the-air broadcasters like CTV, Global and CHUM.

“English-language broadcasters say they are committed to Canadian drama, but right now there is only one Canadian drama series on air in Global’s prime time schedule, and three on CTV’s,” said Suzette Couture, an award-winning screenwriter who wrote the most-watched TV movie of 2005, *The Man Who Lost Himself*. “That’s discouraging for experienced writers who are forced to look for work in the U.S. It’s even more discouraging for emerging screenwriters – but ultimately, it means no Canadian television drama for Canadian audiences.”

Joining Couture at the CRTC hearings into the future of television was James Hurst, showrunner for the hit series *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, and one of the few Canadian screenwriters with a show on in prime time. Hurst told the CRTC that having the opportunity to work on over 100 episodes of his show helped him learn his craft. “Some broadcasters have made the pitch for quality over quantity, but that’s the wrong way to go. You can’t make quality programming that Canadians want to watch by producing one series a year. And you can’t build an audience on limited runs and repeats.”

Canadian screenwriters are requesting that private, English-language broadcasters 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.

“It’s no coincidence that eight of the top ten shows in Canada are American dramas,” said screenwriter Rebecca Schechter, president of the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC). “Drama, in particular one-hour drama, is the most popular form of entertainment in the world. If this country doesn’t produce quality drama of its own, Canadians will watch someone else’s.”

“We are presenting a completely manageable formula for broadcasters,” explained Maureen Parker, WGC Executive Director. “Spending goes up as revenues go up, and goes down if revenues are down. The CRTC now can step up to the plate and protect the public’s interest by ensuring they will have the choice to see Canadian drama on TV.”

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For more information please contact Maureen Parker, Executive Director at (416) 414-6233, or Barb Farwell, Director of Communications, at (416) 305-5551.

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.