



Drastic Cuts to Cultural Programs Will Hurt Canadian Economy and Audiences

For Immediate Release – Toronto – March 30, 2012 – The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) is deeply concerned about the substantial cuts to culture outlined in today's Federal budget, in particular the cumulative effect of cuts to the audiovisual sector, including CBC, Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board.

We recognize that every government department has to respond to economic circumstances, and we expected to see a reduction of support to Canadian cultural organizations. However, the depth of today's cuts will constrain the production of Canadian programming across media platforms. Canadians will have less choice of quality Canadian entertainment on all their screens.

Cuts to Telefilm Canada will mean less money for feature film in Canada and make the challenge for presence on our movie screens even more difficult. And 10% less support for the NFB means less support for Award-winning Canadian animation and documentaries – all at a time when the NFB had found innovative ways to reach and build its audiences.

However, it is the escalating reductions to the parliamentary appropriation for CBC that may have the most far-reaching and damaging consequences. Such a cut will severely compromise CBC's ability to deliver on its mandate under the *Broadcasting Act*, and to continue to offer a necessary alternative to Canada's private broadcasters.

WGC Executive Director Maureen Parker says "this budget is more than belt tightening; it is squeezing the life from the public broadcaster. The CBC makes a critical contribution to excellence, employment and economic generation in the Canadian television and digital media industries. It is the main driver of Canadian production. In addition to spin-off economic activity, CBC productions generate thousands of knowledge economy jobs for screenwriters, actors, directors, producers, crew, technical and production services and more. The cuts in this budget will have a devastating effect on the entire production community in Canada, and ultimately on the quality of programming choice for Canadian audiences."

WGC President Jill Golick noted that "the public broadcaster is the home of Canadian stories – only the CBC provides high quality Canadian drama 12 months of the year. *Republic of Doyle*, *Arctic Air*, *The Rick Mercer Report* and *Heartland* regularly draw more than 1 million viewers, and are frequently in the company of big-budget U.S.-import shows like *House* and *American Idol* in the week's Top 30 in Canada. Canadians want Canadian stories, Canadian entertainment – and the CBC delivers. Compromising CBC's ability to provide programming that reflects who we are means Canadians will recognize themselves less in their own media."

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents more than 2,000 professional English-language screenwriters across Canada. These are the creators who write the Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our televisions, movie screens and digital platforms.

Budget cuts of this magnitude may force the CBC to program inexpensive U.S. shows, more reality series and minority co-productions, and less shows like *Republic of Doyle* and *Heartland* – popular programming that we can truly call our own.

In addition to being a key contributor to Canadian identity, the CBC is the lynchpin of a vital cultural industries sector. The economic impact of the CBC encompasses ten provinces and three territories – it is truly national in scope, contribution and coverage. In tough economic times, we need to invest in the kinds of activity that make us stronger as a nation. Weakening the CBC weakens Canada.

Taken together, the cuts to culture in general and Canadian programming production in particular will hurt the Canadian economy and Canadian audiences.

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