



WGC Asks CRTC to Uphold Canadian Content Creation

Toronto — May 10, 2018 — The Writers Guild of Canada has weighed in on the second, crucial stage of the reconsideration of the flawed CRTC decision of May 2017. In that decision, the CRTC essentially slashed private broadcaster minimum spending on Canadian programs by 40 per cent. The WGC, along with other industry groups, successfully appealed to the Cabinet of Canada, resulting in the decision being sent back to the Commission for reconsideration.

Today's WGC filing to the CRTC asserts that English-language ownership groups (Bell Media Inc., Corus Entertainment Inc., and Rogers Media Inc.) must face their obligations to Canadians. Instead, both Bell and Corus maintain the view that spending on "programs of national interest" (PNI), which includes drama, children's and comedy, be at lower than historical levels.

"It's clear from the private broadcasters' submissions that they view Canadian programming as a regulatory penalty," says WGC Executive Director Maureen Parker. "This seems very shortsighted given that scripted shows like drama are what audiences everywhere want to watch. And the creation of Canadian shows is the sole reason private broadcasters exist in the Canadian system."

Newly elected WGC President Dennis Heaton adds, "The stories created by Canadian audio-visual creators excel on the world's screens. Programs of national interest are an essential venue for telling their stories to Canada and the world. Lowering PNI spending would amount to a huge loss to Canadian culture."

The WGC also notes that the ownership groups have provided no new statistical or policy-based evidence to support their positions. Instead, Bell introduced an argument that establishing PNI at historical spending levels constitutes a spending "ceiling" rather than a "floor" from which spending can grow. The argument is illogical — and perhaps unintentionally ironic as Bell is lobbying for PNI expenditures at below historical levels.

As well, Corus claims in its submission to be offering an increase of spending on PNI even though it too is offering less than historical levels — a key reason why Minister of Canadian Heritage Mélanie Joly granted the Cabinet appeal in the first place. The WGC views both strategies as a dodge to lower the commitment to the creation of Canadian programming.

The Writers Guild of Canada urges the CRTC, under its leadership of Chairman Ian Scott and Vice-Chairperson (Broadcasting) Caroline J. Simard, to stand strong and uphold Canadian content creation.

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The Writers Guild of Canada represents 2,200 professional English-language screenwriters across Canada, the creators of distinctly Canadian entertainment enjoyed on all screens.