



Time is running out for the Canadian television industry
CRTC action and interim loan to CTF needed now

For immediate release

Ottawa, February 13, 2007 – This morning, Heritage Minister Bev Oda told the Standing Committee on Heritage that she will be sending a letter to Shaw Communications Inc. and Groupe Vidéotron Ltd. asking them to resume their monthly payments to the Canadian Television Fund (CTF).

“This is a great first step. Shaw and Vidéotron have been delinquent, and we’re pleased the Minister is calling them on it,” said Maureen Parker, Executive Director of the Writers Guild of Canada (WGC), who was making a presentation on the future of the CTF right after the Minister. “But time is running out for our industry and we are concerned a letter may not be enough.”

Today, the CRTC acknowledged that they have a role to play, and while they will give the CTF Board, Shaw and Vidéotron time to resolve this situation – the CRTC is prepared, if necessary, to move quickly and amend the regulations to ensure that the monthly payments become law.

“While the WGC is pleased the CRTC is getting involved, we are dismayed that they are giving any legitimacy to Shaw and Vidéotron’s complaints,” said Parker. “The proper process for dealing with complaints is through a public hearing in front of the Commission, where everyone has a say.”

In addition, the WGC does not support the diversion of funds into private production funds for Shaw and Vidéotron. “The CTF has worked hard to establish policies that will ensure that all Canadians have a variety of domestic programs to watch – without having to receive Jim Shaw’s stamp of approval,” said WGC President Rebecca Schechter.

As of April 1st, the CTF will be 27% short, which amounts to a loss of \$246 million in production volume and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. That money would finance 15 one-hour drama series of 13 episodes each, or 66 TV movies.

“We asked the Heritage Committee to ensure the government steps in and provides the CTF with an interim loan to cover the shortfall in funding in order to ensure stability for our TV industry,” said Parker. “If we don’t receive that money now the busy summer production season will be in jeopardy.”

For more information, please contact Barb Farwell, Director of Communications, Writers Guild of Canada, at 416-979-7907 or 1-800-567-9974, or by email at b.farwell@wgc.ca

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents more than 1,800 professional screenwriters across Canada who create the distinctly Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our televisions, movie screens, radios 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.

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