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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ferne Downey

CRTC TV Policy: the new score **Cancon: 2; Broadcasters: 3**

March 23, 2010: I awaited yesterday's new CRTC TV policy with bated breath. Ten years of action was coming down to one decision that would re-write the rules and hopefully bring Canadian TV drama back from death-watch. I was feeling optimistic, but equally prepared to launch into a victory dance or a stomp. Turns out I needed to do a bit of both.

As I read through the documents online I was ticking off our 'asks' one by one - the CRTC was following our plan almost to a T. Canadian programming expenditures? Check. A special spending requirement for Canadian drama and comedy? Check. A rule to make sure said dramas and comedies appear in our primetime schedules? Hello? Anyone? Sadly the CRTC took a pass on this one. Instead of guaranteeing Canadians that they would get two hours of scripted programming in prime time each week (a measly two out of 18 hours) the regulator gave broadcasters free licence to ship their dramas and comedies to their affiliated niche specialty channels.

Winning two out of three of our asks is definitely a step forward and a testament to the efforts of so many of you who helped get our message to the Commission. As recently as a year ago, the CRTC Chair Konrad von Finckenstein had suggested that we give up on our idea of making broadcasters spend a percentage of their prior year's gross revenues on scripted programming. But you know what? He listened. He admitted to us last fall that the CRTC's 1999 TV policy was a failure, and he made some big steps to abandon that disastrous policy - thanks, I am sure, to our efforts and those of our partners in this fight - the WGC, DGC and CFTPA.

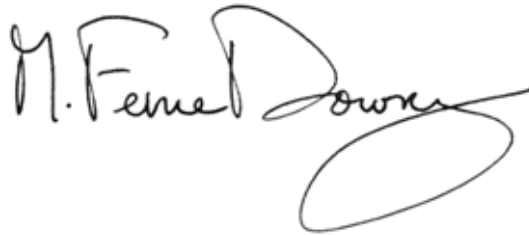
The missing piece of the new policy, however, is a big concern. By not telling the broadcasters that they have to air a specific amount of scripted Canadian programming in prime time on their conventional stations, the CRTC has once again left us 'hoping' it will happen. But we've seen time and time again, when broadcasters aren't told to do something - they don't.

Luckily, we will have a last kick at the can. The CRTC will look at each corporate broadcasting group when their licences are renewed in the spring of 2011 and will issue specific details and requirements for each. We'll be there in full force pressing for requirements to make broadcasters make room for our stories in prime time and to stop feeding us that steady diet of made-in-the-U.S. programming.

So rather than dance or stomp, I'm looking at the new TV policy merely as "the floor" and when we get to licence renewals, we will push - hard.

In solidarity,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Ferné Downey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Ferne Downey
President, ACTRA National

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