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home site map glossary industry links contact

HOME
WHAT IS ACTRA
WORKING WITH ACTRA
MEMBERSHIP IN ACTRA
NEWS & INFORMATION
DOCUMENT LIBRARY
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
WHAT'S HAPPENING
FACE TO FACE ONLINE
ACTRA BRANCHES
ACTRA PLAN
ACTRA PRS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ferne Downey

Our TV Truth

November 2009 - Well, friends, the cable companies and the private broadcasters are rumbling in very public places and confusing the heck out of people. Every sane person is confused by the blatantly contradictory claims and wondering who's right. (Actor Peter Keleghan likened the networks and cable outfits duking it out, to "watching a bad divorce between a very rich couple.")

But beneath all the full-colour rhetoric, TV and newspaper ads, music videos, and travelling bovines, it's actually pretty simple: they're both the bad guys.

The cable companies represent the greater of two evils because they are ripping off consumers and passing it off as an imposed "TV tax." They will not take any portion of their more than \$2 billion in corporate profits last year and apply it towards the Local Programming Improvement Fund (LPIF). Why? Cuz they don't want to. They would rather create fear and loathing in we the citizens of Canada, that we will be taxed and taxed and taxed to death if we ever want to see scripted Canadian programming on our TV ever again. The CRTC had said considering cable co's profits, there was no reason they should pass the fee along to consumers. But they did.

The private broadcasters are little better. They are hoping to force cable companies to pay for the ability to offer their signals in their cable packages (AKA 'fee-for carriage' or 'value for signal'). They want and want and want and want but will not state what they would do with this new money if they got it. Would they commit that money to original Canadian programming in prime time? They won't say so out loud which makes me think that is NOT their intention. They have established a clear pattern over the past decade of extravagant cross border TV program shopping in L.A. Is that what they will do? Again? 'Til the end of time? We could have been the broadcasters' best friends - but they are too reluctant to commit to what it is that we care most passionately about - our TV, our stories, our Canadian drama and comedy on our airwaves.

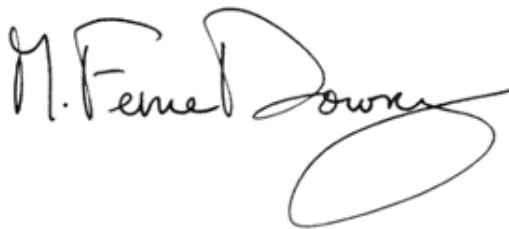
The truth is, cable and broadcasters are both getting free rides and we're paying for it in higher cable bills and less Canadian programming on our TVs. ACTRA wants cable companies to do more to support the system that is serving them so profitably. Cable companies are making buckets of money especially since the CRTC deregulated cable rates in 2002; Rogers has increased their basic cable rates an average of 85% while Shaw customers are paying an average 68% more. And cable companies should absorb any new regulatory fees, they must not be allowed to pas the buck on to Canadian consumers. And as I'm contemplating these various injustices, it seems like it is high time now to reregulate cable rates.

Don't get stressed out. Line up with us, the good guys! When the CRTC kicks off hearings into the future of Canadian TV on November 16, we'll be here in force asking them to re-impose spending and content requirements on private broadcasters. It's time our Canadian TV - our drama and our comedy - was front and centre in this debate.

Visit www.actra.ca and www.ourtv.ca and let the passionate Canadian citizen in your heart sing out. Rally with us on Parliament Hill on November 16, or stake out some turf in whatever city or town you happen to be in that day. Contact your local ACTRA branch. Let all of Canada know that the argument is about is our culture, our TV and, as Canadians, our voice. Despite big cable and broadcasters' hopes to the contrary, the airwaves belong to us!

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

ARCHIVES OF PRESIDENT'S MESSAGES

- [October 1, 2009 - President's Video Message](#) (video)
- [August 25, 2009 - Blame greed for your cable bill blues](#)
- [August 2009 - Common Cause](#)
- [June 2009 - Fuelled with Optimism and Dreaming Big](#)

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