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PERFORMERS TELL CRTC TO STAND UP FOR CANADIAN TV
We owe it to future generations to get this right

GATINEAU – Today at the CRTC’s hearings on private TV broadcaster licence renewals, ACTRA performers Julie Stewart, R.H. Thomson and Richard Hardacre, ACTRA’s National President urge the Commission to stand firm and resist calls for rolling back Canadian content obligations.

“Rather than cave into private broadcasters’ demands for far fewer Canadian content rules, we’re saying let’s not panic, let’s hold the line for one year and issue status quo licences,” said Richard Hardacre, National President, ACTRA. “Let’s not fool ourselves. Broadcasters want to get rid of content regulations so they can offset their outrageous levels of spending on Hollywood shows. Less Canadian content on our airwaves won’t make our broadcasting system stronger; it will make it irrelevant. We owe it to future generations to get this right.”

Instead of taking any responsibility for their financial predicaments, private broadcasters are using the economic downturn to hold Canadians hostage on the issue of fee-for-carriage. They’re threatening to close stations and cut local news in a cynical move to liberate themselves of regulations that they never wanted in the first place. ACTRA insists that Canadian programming and drama in particular should not suffer in the rush to respond to current challenges facing the broadcasting industry.

“No doubt private broadcasters are facing challenges just like everyone else in this global recession. But despite cries to the contrary, this is not the end of broadcasting as we know it. Adjustments may be required, but we don’t need a revolution,” said R.H. Thomson.

“Regulations aren’t really to blame for any troubles facing private broadcasters. Regulations are an agreed condition of license. The broadcasters got the flexibility they demanded in 1999 when the CRTC gave in and relaxed requirements for Canadian drama,” he added. “That relaxation was a disaster for Canadian content.”

“We recognize that the middle of a recession is not the right time to make major changes. But let’s be clear. Canadians deserve more, not less, Canadian programming, said Julie Stewart. “Once this cycle ends ACTRA will be pushing for a long-term commitment to increased spending on and broadcasting of Canadian TV drama.”

In addition to deregulation broadcasters have been very vocal in their demands for fee-for-carriage.

“We’re not against fee-for-carriage in principle. What we are against is giving private broadcasters a new source of revenue and them giving Canadians nothing in return,” said Stewart.

ACTRA (Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists) is the national organization of professional performers working in the English-language recorded media in Canada. ACTRA represents the interests of 21,000 members across Canada – the foundation of Canada’s highly acclaimed professional performing community.

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For more information: Carol Taverner, Public Relations Officer, (416) 644-1519, ctaverner@actra.ca

Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists

ACTRA National Office

625 Church Street · Suite 300 · Toronto ON M4Y 2G1
Toll free 1-800-387-3516 · Tel (416) 489-1311
Fax (416) 489-8076 · E-mail national@actra.ca · www.actra.ca

Affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
and the International Federation of Actors (FIA)

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