

Healthy independent production sector essential for diversity of content in system

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The Canadian Film and Television Production Association (CFTPA) appeared before the CRTC today to provide oral remarks and to underline the critical role of independent producers in the Canadian broadcasting system. The independent production sector spans all regions, cultures and viewpoints, providing Canadian television viewers with a Canadian perspective on our country, our world, and our place in it.

“Consolidation is here to stay, but the commission can ensure that it doesn’t result in a reduction of diversity of programming by increasing the request for Canadian priority programming in primetime timeslots from 75% to 85%,” said Julia Keatley of Keatley Entertainment Ltd.

The CFTPA is not opposed to consolidation in the broadcasting sector, within limits, and provided sufficient safeguards are put in place to mitigate concerns about gate-keeping, undue preference, or other anti-competitive practices potentially associated with increases in vertical or horizontal integration.

“There is a real danger that consolidation of ownership can result in diminished opportunities for Canadian programmes,” said Ira Levy, of Breakthrough Films and Television, “We believe that the best way to ensure diversity is to encourage a higher level of priority programming from independent producers.”

Broadcasters must give Canadian priority programming, made by independent producers, a real and permanent place in prime time, in order to have a healthy Canadian broadcasting system. The CFTPA also states the critical importance of broadcasters to provide adequate financing for productions and calls on the Commission to ensure equity and fairness in the business relationship between broadcasters and producers through Terms of Trade Agreements.

“There is a significant imbalance of power when looking at our broadcasting system. The commission must do its part to ensure that there is a level playing field with these large vertically integrated broadcast groups,” said Guy Mayson, President and CEO, CFTPA. “A healthy independent production sector translates into a healthy broadcasting system.”

With increased consolidation Canadian television broadcasters have an unprecedented amount of market power. As a result, there is real potential for a reduction in available windows for producers to sell product. This has considerable implications for the independent production sector and runs counter to encouraging diversity of voices within the system.