

TV regulator relaxes minimum Canadian content rule

OTTAWA, CANADA: Canada's television regulator announced on Thursday an easing of rules requiring local broadcasters to show a minimum amount of Canadian-made programming, saying the industry must adapt to a "fundamental shift in the television landscape."



"Television quotas have become "an idea that is wholly anachronistic"." (Image: Aaron Escobar, via Wikimedia Commons)

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) reduced the quota for the number of Canadian programs that local television stations must broadcast during the day from 55% to zero.

It is, however, maintaining a requirement that 50% of primetime programming - between 0600 and 1100 pm - is produced in the country.

The original restrictions were legislated in 1968 in order to give a boost to Canada's struggling film and television industry and to limit a "tidal wave" of American shows watched by Canadians.

Today, about Can\$4bn (\$3.15bn) is spent annually to produce Canadian television shows, according to CRTC figures.

But recent on-demand online video offered by Netflix and others has thrown a wrench into efforts to shield Canada's film and television industry.

"Increasingly, Canadians are bypassing the traditional curators of content, the broadcasters, and watching programs in new ways: on their mobile devices, by binge-viewing multiple episodes of a TV series in one sitting and by accessing vast online libraries of content from around the world," CRTC chair Jean-Pierre Blais said.

In this world of choice, television quotas have become "an idea that is wholly anachronistic," he said.

The CRTC is also eliminating rules dictating the kinds of programs specialty channels may broadcast.

It is forcing two new video-on-demand services launched by Canada's largest cable and telecommunications companies to be offered to all Canadians, instead of just to their own cable or Internet subscribers, after viewers complained.

The changes are part of an overhaul of the way Canadians watch television and the prices they pay, following CRTC hearings last year.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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