

Government Orders

"provide programming that is predominantly Canadian, using predominantly Canadian crea—"

My amendment states:

"and presentation of programming, in particular in prime viewing time between 19:00 and 23:00 hours on television, unless"

Here is the problem that has been pointed out by all sorts of committees. Canadian television stations, both public and private, but especially private, are not producing enough Canadian content, enough Canadian drama, good Canadian programs. They are making progress, partly through what we as MPs have been doing telling them in committee, but they have not been producing the kind of programming that is necessary. Let me say a little bit about that.

The amendment deals with the amount of Canadian content presented in prime time—that is what we are concerned about—by private broadcasters. At present the rule states that 60 per cent of Canadian programming is required in an 18-hour broadcast day, from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m., calculated over a year. That is the rule.

In the evening, 6 p.m. to 12 p.m.—notice that broad time— public networks must present 60 per cent Canadian content and private broadcasters must present 50 per cent. The problem lies in the definition of prime time.

In television circles, in the industry, the real prime time is between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. I see the member for Hamilton—Wentworth over there. He knows this area very well and I think he would concur with what I am saying. The CRTC's definition has effectively allowed private television to get around its obligations by providing news between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. and 12 p.m. People who are watching this in British Columbia, my home province, know that B.C.-TV news, for example, is big between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. and 12 p.m.

In the remaining four hours, only 25 per cent Canadian content is needed on average to meet this requirement. The result is American sitcoms. There are a lot of them on private stations, and not Canadian drama. Moreover, the reporting periods for measuring Canadian content have been changed from the CRTC from monthly to quarterly to annually. This has allowed private broadcasters to dump much of the Canadian content in the summer months, so it is even worse.

Let us look at drama, because this is the real domination. I will just give some examples. We looked at this. From 6 a.m. to 2 a.m. viewing, it was 30 per cent Canadian and 68 per cent U.S. and for 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., it was 24 per cent Canadian and 74 per cent U.S. By programming type it was, for the news, 92 per cent Canadian and 8 per cent foreign. So Canadians are watching Canadian news. For public affairs, it was 68 per cent Canadian and 32 per cent foreign. When it gets down to drama, it is 4 per cent Canadian and 96 per cent foreign. That is where it really shows up.

For the average anglophone teenager, 80 per cent of their viewing time is spent watching foreign programs.

[Translation]

I see my friend and colleague, the NDP member for Quebec. In Quebec, for Francophones, for young Francophones, it is 50 per cent.

[English]

Francophone teenagers spend 50 per cent of their viewing time watching foreign programming. For young people particularly, and Canadians generally, when it comes to movies and drama, it is 4 per cent Canadian and 97 per cent foreign. In terms of variety, music and quizzes, it is 22 per cent Canadian and 78 per cent foreign. This is an area that we have to make progress in.

According to the task force on broadcasting, of the 52,000 hours of English television programming available to the average Canadian family, barely 370 hours are Canadian drama. That is 370 hours out of 5,200 hours. In French language television, it is 27,000 hours. That is a bit better, but it is 630 hours of Canadian drama. Ninety-eight per cent of all drama on English television is foreign. You can see the problem. Every report on broadcasting in recent years has agreed that the private sector is not doing its job in producing Canadian programming.

I am not naive, Mr. Speaker. I know how difficult it is to produce Canadian programming and how much more expensive it is to produce a half hour of Canadian drama as opposed to buying *Dallas* or *MASH* or some other American program. One has to sympathize, but one also has to say to Canadian private broadcasters: "Come on. You've got to do better. You've got to do more. You are making good money from the airwaves, you've got to produce more drama."