

New CRTC program categories : Reality Bites

November 4, 2010 by [Stephen Zolf](#)

The CRTC has issued revised definitions for some of its Canadian television program categories following a public consultation process earlier this year. The television program categories are central in the CRTC's oversight of licensed programming services and are used to delineate the specific nature of service governing every licensed Canadian conventional, specialty and pay TV programming service and compliance with conditions of licence. The program categories are also the basis for all broadcaster program logging to ensure compliance with Canadian content requirements.

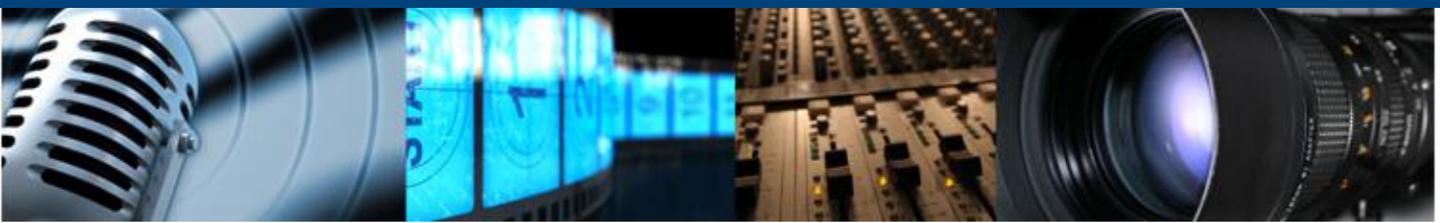
Revisions to the program definitions follow the new TV policy announced in March 2010 for the large English-language private television ownership groups. In the TV policy the CRTC replaced the on-air scheduling requirements for Canadian "priority programming" with a new expenditure requirement for "programs of national interest", which the CRTC has deemed "the primary vehicles for communicating Canadian stories and values". Programs of national interest encompass programs from categories 2(b) (Long-form documentary) and category 7 (Drama and comedy). The CRTC has also decided that Canadian award shows that celebrate Canadian creative talent are programs of national interest, such as *The Geminis*, *The Junos*, *The Giller Prize*, *The National Aboriginal Achievement Awards*, *The East Coast Music Awards* and *The Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards*.

Definitional changes to the program categories have been made in three key areas:

Reality television and Long-form documentaries: The CRTC has determined that reality television does not need the same regulatory support as long-form documentaries. Consequently, the Commission has created a new sub-category for reality programming by redefining the current category 11 (General Entertainment) as category 11(a) (General Entertainment and Human Interest) and created a new category, 11(b), "Reality television". "Reality television" describes programs that present unscripted dramatic or humorous situations, documents actual events and typically features ordinary people instead of professional actors. This type of programming involves passively following individuals as they go about their daily personal and professional activities. It is characterized by very minimal amounts of in-depth critical analysis of a specific subject or point of view in contrast to the key defining element (long-form documentary programming category 2(b)).

Canadian Award Shows: The Commission has now codified its TV Policy ruling to include Canadian award shows. The Commission has established a "living list" of eligible award shows that will be published on its website. Under the proposal, should a party wish to have a Canadian award show considered for inclusion on the list, the party would provide a detailed rationale to the Commission for its qualification as a program of national interest.

The following criteria will apply for determining award shows that will qualify as programs of national interest:



1. Award shows of national or regional scope that celebrate Canadian creative talent and/or cultural diversity and achievements in Canadian arts and culture (broadcasting, film, music, video, new media and the arts sector).
2. Parties must apply to the Commission to add or delete an award show and must demonstrate that it clearly meets or no longer meets the above-noted criteria.
3. A full list of eligible programs may be found on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca, as amended from time to time.

Eligible expenses related to qualifying award shows will count towards the expenditure requirement for programs of national interest established in the TV policy.

References to program length and advertising: The Commission has also decided to amend the definition of category 2(b) (long form documentary) to specify a minimum length of at least 22 minutes (formerly 30 minutes less commercial breaks) and to clarify that programs that fall under the new Reality television category do not qualify as long form documentary programming.

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