

TV Signal Theft – Robbing Canadians

by: News Canada (NC)—According to some recent ads, there's no such thing as 'free' cable or satellite TV. The bottom line message: television signal theft is just that, theft. It's all part of a recent campaign program by Canada's broadcasting industry to try and educate the Canadian public to the serious problem of signal theft. The reason is simple: Hundreds of thousands of Canadian households are estimated to be illegally accessing television services, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars being siphoned out of the Canadian broadcasting system each year. That translates into lost income and revenue for Canadian actors, writers, directors, producers, technicians, distributors, broadcasters, advertisers and many others employed in the production and airing of Canadian television programming. It means, simply, less money in the system, fewer productions, less investment and fewer jobs. Those millions could be going to Canadian companies, paying for Canadian jobs, producing quality Canadian programming and helping drive Canada's economy. The most direct result of signal theft is seen in its impact on the Canadian Television Fund. Every time revenue drops for Canada's broadcasting industry so does the 5 per cent of revenues the industry contributes to support production of Canadian programming through the Canadian Television Fund. It amounts to \$4 to \$7.5 million lost annually. That's \$4 million to \$7.5 million fewer dollars available to support the production of Canadian drama, children's programming, documentaries and variety and performing arts programming. The loss of funding is critical. It comes at a time when the Canadian Television Fund should be striving to increase the number of hours of programming it helps create and focusing on initiatives that attract and build Canadian audiences – not scaling back. Yet the law is clear on satellite signal theft. In the spring of 2002, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled that unauthorized reception of satellite signals is illegal. Since the ruling, the broadcasting industry, led by companies like Bell ExpressVu, has worked closely with the Government to stop signal theft. Illegal equipment has been seized, charges have been laid, and dealers supplying illegal equipment have been shut down. But it will take more than just law enforcement to solve this problem. It will take a change in perception on the part of the Canadian public and an understanding that just like shoplifting, signal theft is not a victimless crime. More information on the issue can found by visiting: www.bell.ca/exvuusignaltheft - News Canada

About the Author

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