

Cable strategy

Re: It's Dangerous To Deny TV Viewers Choice, Janet Yale, July 28.

The Canadian Cable Television Association (CCTA) would have us believe cable companies are champions of consumer choice, and that Canadians are so starved for programming that they are forced to steal it.

Canadians already have access to the vast

majority of the programming that the CCTA wants to start charging its subscribers more to receive. For example, HBO's *Sex in the City*, *The Sopranos*, *Six Feet Under* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, to name a few, are already available on Bravo!, CTV, Showcase and The Movie Network. If the CCTA has its way, Canadians will be forced to subscribe and pay three times — once to analog cable, then to cable's digital services, and finally to a high-cost premium digital package — to have access to these shows.

The CCTA also refers to its recent viewer survey, a survey based on highly leading questions that was not designed to ask Canadians if they would be willing to pay more for what they already have, and that supposedly proves that people steal TV signals because they want access to these U.S. channels. Nothing could be further from the truth. Millions of Americans who have the option of subscribing legally to HBO and ESPN instead steal their signals. Theft is about getting something for nothing. As Ms. Yale has said, it's tough to compete with free. To that, I would add — you don't compete with free by charging someone more for something they already receive. What Ms. Yale also omits to mention is that the CCTA has also asked the CRTC for permission to sell advertising on all U.S. stations available in Canada. Put these two applications together and cable's strategy is clear: add more U.S. stations as an excuse to raise cable bills, then sell advertising to maximize the cash grab.

*Glenn O'Farrell, president and CEO,
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