



For Immediate Release

June 20, 2012

BROADCASTING COMMISSION WARNS BROADCAST AND CABLE INDUSTRY

Breakdown in Standards will not be tolerated

On Tuesday June 19, 2012 the Broadcasting Commission convened a meeting with the heads of television, radio and cable entities to discuss the Commission's concerns about an increasing number of breaches in content standards, copyright compliance and service coverage.

In his remarks, BCJ Chairman, Prof. Hopeton Dunn stated that, "the Commission [preferred] to signal its concerns way ahead of time, to give licensees an opportunity to seriously address the infringements through self regulation, training and disciplinary measures."

The Commission shared with media heads the details of problematic song lyrics, movies, and music videos which had resulted in several findings of breach since January 2011. These included transmissions of the F-word, and salacious and explicit sexual content, several of which were transmitted in the morning and afternoon hours on radio and television.

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The Commission has warned that it is prepared to take stronger action similar to its landmark 2009 Directives which shook up the broadcasting and entertainment industries and subsequently resulted in the dismissal of some on air personnel and near suspension of broadcast licences.

The radio, television and cable executives were also warned against the carriage of unauthorized cable channels and the transmission of music and other programming content without the requisite licences. Professor Dunn also referred to the 2012 United States Trade Representative's Report which indicated that Jamaica remains on the US Watch List for copyright infringements. This is in relation to failure to compensate performing rights organizations for the public performances of music and the offering of unauthorized programming, by some cable operators. The Commission has also been receiving complaints from local and international rights holders and Collecting Societies.

The executives were urged to immediately cease the carriage of unauthorized cable channels and the transmission of music and other programming content without the requisite arrangements with rights holders or their duly authorized agents. Failure to do so, the Commission warned, would result in the appropriate measures being taken, similar to some years ago a number of cable licences were suspended.

The Commission is also dissatisfied with the quality of service coverage across the island by both broadcast and cable operators. A recent Commission survey revealed that television stations were failing to reach viewers in several areas across the country, notably Portland, St. Thomas, St. Mary and large sections of Clarendon, Manchester and Trelawny.

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In relation to radio, a survey of listeners in fifty-three (53) communities across the island was conducted in April 2012. The survey revealed that 13 of the 19 radio licensees providing coverage nationally were serving between 70%-100% of the island; but that 3 stations were reaching between 60%-69%; and 3 were covering only up to 45% of the market.

The coverage by cable television is also less than desirable. Of the 243 zones licensed across the island, 188 (77%) are currently receiving cable service. 55 zones (23%) currently receive no service.

The BCJ also announced that the results of a commissioned study on the output of Jamaica's Electronic Media Sector will shortly be release the public. The study was conducted by the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communications and investigated audience needs, use of new media, the public perception of the Broadcasting Commission and the impact of the Children's Code for Programming, among other matters.

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