

Media Need Tighter Regulations

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INSIGHT INTO the future of media and regulation was provided at a Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica regulation conference at the Jamaica Pegasus hotel, New Kingston last week.

Chairman of the commission, Professor Hopeton Dunn, proposed that regulation should be introduced that would secure the guaranteed dissemination of some major events on free-to-air television that would restrict private entities from buying out the broadcasting rights to such programming.

He described the proposed change as public access to high- value and special content.

"The upcoming FIFA Football World Cup and the recent talent show - 'The Voice' - featuring our own Tessanne Chin, are examples of premium broadcast content. Broadcasters extract the premium economic value from these programmes through the acquisition of exclusive broadcast rights for airing these programmes, sometimes on secured subscription systems, such as what happened with the recent winter Olympics. In these scenarios, there is the distinct possibility of undermining the public interest, especially where pre-existing cable contracts appear to confer unimpeded rights of access to such premium programming," he remarked.

He said policy is necessary to engender a balance between the interests of private broadcasting entities and the public interest.

"The Broadcasting Commission is of the view that a mechanism must be found that balances commercial interests with the public-interest needs of the community in which those commercial entities operate. This is what we wrote recently to the International Olympic Committee to clarify what might be expected in terms of free-to air open television coverage during the summer Olympics in which we are so invested as a country."

He revealed that a shortlist of recommendations is being identified by the commission to be put forward for consideration for legislation.