

Changes bolster Canadian content

TORONTO – Minister of Communications Marcel Masse announced the long-awaited changes to the Broadcast Fund here on Mar. 15. At a press conference Masse, flanked by deputy minister de Montigny Marchand, DOC officials and private consultant Paul Audley, predicted the revisions would lead to at least \$125 million worth of Canadian programming in 1985-86 and the equivalent of 5,000 full-time jobs.

Major changes include:

- The Fund may finance up to 49% of 100% Canadian content programs as defined by CRTC criteria. Under the old guidelines Telefilm was limited to a one-third investment regardless of the level of Canadian content.

- Telefilm may increase its participation in a project by matching dollar for dollar license fees paid by Canadian broadcasters, conventional or pay, to a maximum of 49% of the projects budget. This provision will only apply for 1985-86 and is designed to increase the production value of Canadian programs. Masse noted that "this approach provides a completely objective basis for offering additional financial support to production projects which directly reflects the degree to which broadcasters are committed to each project. It will encourage the development of an orderly market for Canadian television programs, exploiting fully all components of the domestic broadcasting market."

- Telefilm Canada may use up to 10% of its funding each year to support the development of scripts and production projects. Producers have long claimed that development has always been the weak link in the production chain. Under the new guideline Telefilm can make available up to \$5.4 million for development in 1985-86. As with program financing development funds will only be released to a producer where a broadcaster has indicated interest in the project.

- In a related measure the Broadcast Fund will be able to provide up to 49% of the financing for pilots of television series.

- Documentary programs of at least 30 minutes in length will now be able to access the Fund provided they are suitable for prime-time exhibition. Previously, only documentaries masquerading as performance pieces, such as Primedia's film about the National Ballet, *Bold Steps*, were eligible for Fund support.

- Provincially owned educa-

tional broadcasters, such as TVOntario, Radio-Quebec, and the Access Network in Alberta, will henceforth be able to access the Fund directly for prime-time entertainment programming. Until now producers could only trigger Fund support with a letter from private off-air broadcasters or the CBC.

- In a move that caught pay-TV off-guard, pay broadcasters are locked out of the Fund. Masse noted that the money for the Broadcast Fund comes from a 6% tax on cable companies paid by their consumers. He said that he had to make sure that that money goes back to the people who paid it in the form of programming. Pay-TV does not meet the criteria of having a signal that is "freely and widely available."

- Telefilm-funded projects will have to be distributed in Canada by Canadian companies. This has been the case till now but the provision was not spelled out in the previous guidelines.

- CBC will commit \$15 million to the private sector for Telefilm-funded productions. After the CBC budget cuts Pierre Juneau announced a freeze on CBC purchases of private production, throwing the private sector into a tailspin. In the Fund's first full year of production, over 80% of the Broadcast Fund was accessed via the CBC. The CBC last year committed \$24 million to Telefilm funded projects. Although CBC's commitment for 1985-86 is substantially less, it will have greater leverage under the new guidelines resulting in about the same total level of production at \$75 million.

In announcing the changes Masse emphasized that the "fundamental guidelines originally established are sound." In particular, production must be market-driven via a broadcaster's letter of intent. Secondly, "as a general policy the Fund should continue to be limited to providing one-third of the financing for television productions. That general formula should be exceeded only in specific and precisely defined circumstances."

The new policy guidelines come into force April 1.

Masse made it clear to his audience of press and leading figures in the TV and film industry that the Telefilm changes were only a short-term solution in developing a stable Canadian production industry. He stressed the "fact that the re-

view of the Broadcast Fund has raised many issues that cannot be properly resolved either by changes to the criteria which govern access to the Fund or changes in the way that Telefilm administers the fund." He noted that the "resources that public and private broadcasters in Canada make available for the purchase of Canadian television programs may reflect many different influences – including the strength of the private broadcasting industry, the way the industry is structured, the regulatory policies of the CRTC, the existence or absence of effective tax incentives, as well as the mandate of the CBC and the way the CBC interprets that mandate." Masse noted that all of those issues would be addressed in the general review of the Broadcast policy. A reliable source indicated that the review process would be completed sometime in the fall of 1985.

The new Telefilm guidelines appear to signal a shift from the Liberal's internationalist, co-production policy, as the funding formula will now allow more Telefilm dollars to flow into 100% Canadian content productions.

One of the effects of the new formula may be to boost regional productions which are more likely to meet that Canadian content requirement.

In making the announcement Masse said that "the Fund must support a genuinely national production industry, drawing effectively on the creativity and the resources of all parts of the country." He added that "the revised criteria also reflect an awareness that it has always been more difficult for independent producers to arrange the necessary financing for projects that are fully Canadian, however important those projects may be culturally."

He also indicated that he would like to see more Canadian productions emanating from the private broadcasters who in the past have not been overly active in the financing of Canadian programmes.

In a warning statement, Masse said, "I shall be communicating to the CRTC my conviction that, where private broadcasters have adequate resources available, they should be expected by the Commission to make a responsible commitment of air time and funds to the kind of projects supported by the Fund." Last year, private broadcasters accounted for less than 20% of Broadcast Fund projects.

CBC layoffs leave many problems unresolved

TORONTO – With the April 1 deadline for the CBC layoffs passed, many issues remain unresolved between CBC management and the three CBC unions – the Association of Television Producers and Directors, NABET and CUPE.

NABET official Bryon Lowe told Cinema Canada that "arbitration will continue through the summer." Len Carter, press officer for CUPE Local 667, confirmed that there were many unresolved disputes waiting on arbitration. Kathy Viner, executive director of the producers' union, said that all of her union's cases – 22 producers were laid off – were going before arbitration.

Negotiations have been complicated by bumping provisions in the union contracts which allow for a laid-off senior employee to take over the job of a junior colleague. Lowe said that the "Corporation has made things difficult because they picked people with 15 to 16 years seniority thereby creating a ripple effect because of the bumping. They should have dealt with the most junior people."

To make matters worse, a controversial ruling by federal labor arbitrator, Andre Sylvestre, allows CBC managers who at some time in their careers have worked within a union to

bump back into that union. Carter said that management bumping was ridiculous. He noted one case where a management veteran was bumping back into a union job she had done for eight months 21 years previously. He suspected management bumping was a way CBC could keep their managers and shift them into other positions later on. He added that managers who have not had technical upgrading would not be able to do the work.

As a result of the arbitration ruling, CUPE may institute a ban on overtime which would severely disrupt productions which are often worked on intensively over a period of several weeks.

Viner noted that her members had refused to bump back into the bargaining units.

All three unions were bitter at the way CBC has handled the layoffs. "Relations with management have been strained," said Viner. Carter felt "there was a tremendous amount of bitterness." For Lowe "the process has been acrimonious. We were completely taken aback by the lack of humanity shown by the Corporation in an admittedly difficult situation." Lowe asks "Why didn't they come to us and say we have to reduce staff by

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Artists' protest in Ottawa yields "useful day"

OTTAWA – Contrary to negative reports in the dailies, the Mar. 20 protest by 40 arts groups under the umbrella Coalition for Canadian Cultural Survival was "a very useful day," according to Brian Anthony, national director of the Canadian Conference of the Arts, the principal arts lobby behind the protest.

For the first time, a representative of the arts and culture sectors, CCA president Curtis Barlow, was invited to participate in the National Economic Conference which got underway two days after the protest against Conservative cuts to cultural agencies.

"The two events coming together really helped," Anthony told Cinema Canada. "The message was delivered, and we got in on the consultation process. One of the benefits (of Curtis Barlow's presence at the summit) was his ability to meet with people from different (eco-

nomic and policy) sectors as well as cabinet ministers. I think we've made a broader and longer-lasting impact."

If Prime Minister Mulroney did not have time to meet with the protesting artists, other members of the Cabinet did, notably Communications minister Marcel Masse whose contacts with the cultural community has in recent weeks been "more extensive than (predecessor) Francis Fox managed in his entire career," as one Toronto film industry source put it.

"I've met with the minister (Masse) on several occasions," Anthony told Cinema Canada. "I know him to be very eloquent in French. A lot of people in English Canada don't give him the benefit of the doubt, but I get the impression he's energetic and intelligent and wants to do the right thing."

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