

# No change for pay

TORONTO – Despite government promises of improved access to the \$62 million broadcast fund, little has changed for the pay-TV industry, the president of the First Choice movie channel says.

Fred Klinkhammer, First Choice Canadian Communications Corporation president, said the changes announced December 9 by federal communications minister Flora MacDonald are a disappointment.

In November last year MacDonald said that access to Telefilm Canada's Broadcast Program Development Fund would be opened up.

Shortly afterwards Klinkhammer applauded the move, but when he reviewed the December announcement he said no improvements were actually made for the pay-TV industry.

"It is an exact maintenance of the original status quo – no change at all," he said.

MacDonald, in the December announcement, said the changes "are designed to strengthen program production and provide Canadian viewers with a wider choice of high-quality Canadian programs."

The announcement that pay-TV could get Telefilm money if it had an agreement with a producer and an arrangement that the program would air on an over-the-air channel is not new, Klinkhammer said.

"We have always been able to have access if the producer also had an agreement with a commercial broadcaster."

But a department of communications spokesman said that the original announcement indicated improved access was dependent on certain conditions.

Shirley Serafini said that the government wanted to improve the situation for pay-TV, but not provide access without an agreement with an over-the-air broadcaster or a basic cable broadcaster.

Klinkhammer said independent Canadian producers have about \$2.7 million in cash offers for completed scripts from First Choice for which about \$5.4 million in private investment could be obtained. But without the improved access to Telefilm, they won't have the money to complete projects, he explained.

"The money is no good to the producer unless he can trigger Telefilm (money),"

Klinkhammer told *Cinema Canada*.

"I would like to see the independent production community point out to the government that they really got screwed in this decision."

Klinkhammer said the pay-TV industry has traditionally had trouble reaching exhibition agreements with over-the-air broadcasters like CBC, CTV and the Global television network. He said recent license renewal hearings for the networks confirmed the problem.

"We have got the big three networks on the record as saying we're not playing."

Klinkhammer said the minister's initial announcement of greater access indicated an attempt to remedy a serious problem. Since then something changed, he added.

"I just find it bizarre that there was a time when we didn't have any money and we were struggling to survive and

now we have got the money and are desperately trying to make the contribution and we are being frustrated."

Serafini said nothing changed between the time of the two announcements. She said that under the criteria of the broadcast fund, money is to be provided to improve Canadian programming for the largest audience possible. She explained that pay-TV serves only a small portion of all Canadian viewers.

Both Superchannel and SuperEcran pay-TV officials support the policy, she said.

Those licensed by the CRTC as basic cable broadcasters will gain most under the announced changes, she said. The new provisions are to take effect April 1, 1987.

The new provisions mean programs produced for satellite-to-cable broadcast services (such as pay-TV, Much Music,

the Sports Network and some others) can get access if carried on basic cable service (the channels provided by a cable company for which a converter isn't needed).

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has delayed its hearing into applications for license approval from 23 broadcast groups. Some want to provide new specialty services such as youth, religious and ethnic programming, while some existing specialty services want to go on basic cable and therefore not be an extra expense for subscribers.

The hearings were set for Feb. 10, 1987, but in light of the Telefilm changes the CRTC has asked for new or revised applications. The new deadline for applications has been moved to March 12, 1987. The hearings will probably follow several months later.

## Time Bomb looks for slot

MONTREAL – *Time Bomb*, a docu-cabaret about youth unemployment in the streets of Montreal, is a one-hour made-for-television video looking for a home.

Directed by Mort Ransen (*Bayo*) the film is a blend of documentary footage, skits and a 12-piece musical score depicting the fringe lifestyle of five unemployed young people living together in a low rent warehouse space.

It is this unusual mix, says co-producer Lindalee Tracey, that presents a dilemma for CBC programmers.

"They say they love it because it is so different but they don't know how to slot it."

PBS has also expressed interest, says Tracey, and Telefilm has promised assistance

once a broadcaster has been secured by Tracey and co-producer Peter Bierman who have incorporated the film under Montreal Foundation of the Performing Arts.

With National Film Board assistance and a combined total of \$60,000 from the secretaries of state at the federal and provincial level, the project was shot during the sum-

mer of 1985 over a five-week period in 34 different locations. About 83 cast and crew worked on a deferred salary basis amounting to an estimated \$160,000.

Ransen and Bierman wrote the script after 124 interviews with Montreal's unemployed youth and both Edward Knoll and David Rimmer penned the musical score.

## Lapidus to Spectra consult

TORONTO – Spectrafilm has hired a high profile American consultant to help the company with plans to expand its distribution of films this year.

Larry Lapidus, a partner in Creative Consultants, Ltd., has been hired as a special consultant to help Spectrafilm with a plan to distribute 12 films in 1987.

Previously Lapidus worked as vice-chairman and president of RKO Century Warner Theatres. He has also held executive jobs with Stanley Warner, General Cinema, Loew's and Mann Theatres.

Lapidus will be working with Spectrafilm's vice-president of distribution Nick Perrott, a press release states.

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