

# Labour woes end on Quebec sets

MONTREAL — Seven years of contract negotiations, often embittered, were concluded recently by a round of handshakes between Quebec producers and representatives of a 700-member technicians union.

A two-year collective agreement was signed, Jan. 14, by Rock Demers, president of the Association des producteurs de films et de vidéo du Québec (APFVQ) and Robert Guertin, acting president of the Syn-

dicat des techniciennes et des techniciens du cinéma du Québec (STCQ).

The STCQ decision to sign the agreement is the result of a union-wide referendum in early December in which 400

members voted 75 percent in favor of accepting what the producers were calling their "final offer."

Highlights of this offer include a three-percent pension fund, wage compensation for night work, a joint accident insurance program and a joint standing committee to deter-

mine special rates for low-budget films. The high and low (minimum) hourly rates on the pay scale are \$9.75 for a production assistant and \$30.00 for a director of photography. The wage scale is based on 1985 figures projected over three years.

"Everybody is very happy about this signing, Guertin told *Cinema Canada*, "it has been a long time coming." The STCQ had been without a collective agreement since 1979.

Guertin says although there may be a residue of dissatisfaction among members about the comparatively low wage rates at the low end of the scale, it was in the best interest of the union to call a referendum and subsequently take the producers' offer.

"There may be those among us who think we might have pursued a better deal but it is our hope," says Guertin, "that people in those lower paying positions won't be there too long if they are any good."

"In the light of the referendum results," explains Guertin, "it is clear that we had to draw the line so as not to lose what we had already gained."

The STCQ/APFVQ working relationship reached an all-time low in early December when a general assembly of the producers' organization voted to annul the collective agreement following an unexpected demand by the STCQ to renegotiate all 56 wage positions in the collective agreement. Prior to this annulment and subsequent referendum, and despite stalled negotiation talks and work stoppages on feature film sets, only 17 wage positions at the lower end of the scale were left unsigned.

Jennifer Jonas, the STCQ secretary, describes as "bewildering" the period during which there was no collective agreement. (On Jan. 5, given the results of the STCQ referendum, the producers voted to lift the annulment).

Jonas was hired as location manager for Filmline International's *Ford: The Man and Machine* the first TV film to start shooting during the annulment period.

"It was like going back 15 years with no contract, no union recognition, no distinction made between union members and beginners. For those of us who have been around for awhile, it was a complete shock," says Jonas.

Jonas says the signing of the collective agreement represents a new beginning in the STCQ/APFVQ relations.

"For the first time in seven years a collective agreement has been signed allowing cinema to be made in Quebec in a normal and respectful fashion."

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