

Language parity legislated in QC

MONTREAL – Modifications to the Cinema Act in Quebec do not discriminate against English-spectators film-viewer, say Quebec government officials.

A recent declaration by Lise Bacon, Quebec's Cultural Affairs minister, saying that Article 83 in the Quebec Cinema Act is a "veritable sieve", coupled with subsequent modifications legislated on Dec. 17, have caused the distributors of English-language film to, once again, sit up and take notice of the province's Cinema Act (Bill 109).

Lise Bacon has modified Bill 109 (article 83). Now, in order to obtain a distribution visa from the Régie du cinéma, (Quebec's regulatory agency for film), all English-language films released in Quebec must be dubbed in French. Furthermore, the theatrical releases, in English and French, must occur on the same day with an equal number of copies available in both languages.

Bill 109 was first introduced by the Parti Québécois in 1983 and modified by the Liberal government in 1986 in an attempt to temper the influence of the U.S. major studios.

As it stood, prior to the recent modifications, Article 83 specified that subtitled or dubbed versions must be released 60 days after the release of the

English-language film.

This eight-week period, historically, has allowed distributors to decide whether to dub the film or withdraw it.

Because of an overall preference in the marketplace for dubbed versions rather than subtitled versions, modifications to Article 83 now require that distributors show dubbing contracts and agree to use an equal number of French-language venues.

Ann Label, assistant press secretary to Lise Bacon, told *Cinema Canada* that in the past distributors "respected the law without respecting the spirit of the law."

She explained that, too often, dubbed or subtitled versions were made but rarely exhibited after the 60 day (8 week) period. Thus, she says, the overriding intent of the modifications is to ensure that the French-language version gets to the screen sooner.

In 1986-1987, 43.7 per cent of all films shown in Quebec were French-language films.

In on-going talks with the minister of Cultural Affairs, distributors have argued against the prohibitive cost of dubbing a major commercial film (between \$40,000 to \$100,000) which might prove, upon release, to be an unpopular film.

They also argue that even a short delay for dubbing pur-

poses could mean that the English version will miss the National Release Date for major cities in Canada and the U.S.

Protectionist measures in France that prohibit Quebec-dubbed films in the domestic market also render dubbing cost ineffective, they say.

Label maintains, however, that the modifications to Bill 109 (article 83) which will be enforced by proclamation in the spring, will be flexible.

"In framing this law, we respect the marketplace and the choice of the people to see a film in French or English. We will also be able to make exceptions when needed," says Label.

The legislation of Bill 59 which contains the modifications to Bill 109 (article 83) forced the National Film Board (NFB) to withdraw from circulation in Quebec all English-language films having no French-dubbed version.

It has been estimated that dubbing at the NFB will cost close to \$1 million and take one year with the required approval of the Régie du cinéma.

NFB Film Commissioner François Macerola has gone on record saying that although he approves of the intent of Bill 109, he feels that the letter of the law has been too rigorously applied in the case of the NFB.

Macerola was not available for comment at press time.

Cannell builds set for Hollywood North

VANCOUVER – After months of uncertainty, Cannell Productions has begun work on a \$20 million state-of-the-art film and tape production complex in North Vancouver, B.C. Demolition of existing buildings is now underway with construction scheduled to begin in May. Cannell plans to be operating out of the new North Shore Studios a year later.

The uncertainty involved negotiations with a number of West Coast labour unions including IATSE and the Teamsters. Cannell had put off committing to the new complex pending contract concessions from the unions. Although the talks are still not completed, real estate options on the so-called Park and Tilford property were about to expire. So, Cannell decided to proceed without a signed agreement. However Cannell Films of Canada vice-president and general manager Steve Sasson says the decision indicates "a degree of optimism" that the unions will agree to terms that will keep the new studios busy.

The 14.5 acre site will include seven sound stages (four at close to 15,000 square feet), a Production Support Building (complete with helicopter landing pad on the roof), a Ven-

dor building for companies supplying support services to the industry and even a gymnasium for employees.

Cannell says North Shore will be the biggest studio complex in Canada. It will also be the most flexible.

Anyone who has ever toured the old movie lots in Hollywood will experience a certain sense of *déjà vu* at North Shore. The entire complex is a movie set in progress. The exterior walls of nearly every building will be constructed as sets-in-the-rough. One wall will look like an all-American highway motel. Another, a row of urban brownstone houses. Yet a third will be a multi purpose classic facade that can dress up as a courthouse, city hall, library or high school. There'll even be a traditional movie theatre facade complete with marquee. These are all generic sets that can be easily adapted to specific needs by adding or subtracting "plugs".

Behind all of these facades are studio offices, workshops and storage areas.

North Shore Studios is the design of Dall-Lana/Griffins Architects of Vancouver. All of the engineering has been contracted to British Columbia firms.

Dubbing war with France heats up

MONTREAL – Union des Artistes, the large French-language actors' union in Quebec, remains adamant that protectionist measures must be imposed against programs dubbed in France and exported to Quebec if the Quebec dubbing industry is to prosper.

"We have asked the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) that just as it imposes Canadian content on television it should impose quotas on the percentage of foreign programs that should be dubbed here," says a UDA spokesperson.

The Quebec dubbing industry has asked both the federal and Quebec governments to pursue a free-market arrangement with France in television and film dubbing, respectively.

According to the Association québécoise des industries techniques du cinéma et de la télévision, while France does close to \$200 million annually

in dubbing of foreign-language television and film, Quebec does \$3 million annually.

About 94 per cent of dubbed programming used in Quebec is American product dubbed in France.

This imbalance for the Quebec industry stems from a French government decree in 1961 which closed the domestic market to all films dubbed outside France. This has not changed in spite of repeated overtures to the French government by Lise Bacon, Quebec minister of Culture, the existence of bilateral trade agreements and a tripartite agreement signed in January 1987 between France, Canada and Quebec to find more equitable trade arrangements in film and television.

In early November, a strike was settled between public and private French broadcasters and the Syndicat française des acteurs (SFA) with assurances for the actors, who reap a

healthy percentage of dubbing fees, that protectionist measures are watertight.

A small concession was won for the Quebec industry in French television where a permissible 42 hours of foreign-dubbed programming has been increased to 140 hours in 1988, 112 hours in 1989 and 84 hours in 1990 when the tripartite agreement is reopened. French private broadcasters say this is the best they could do without prolonging the SFA strike.

This concession was delivered to the Quebec industry, recently, during a meeting in Paris between private broadcasters (France/Quebec), Telefilm Canada and the federal department of Communications.

It was also agreed, says Paul Racine, director-general of federal-provincial relations, department of Communications, that both markets would be

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ACTRA settles half

TORONTO – The Writers Guild of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) has agreed to a contract with independent producers but the Performers Guild continues to negotiate for a better deal.

The agreement, called the IPA for Independent Producers Agreement, will bind producers from the Association of Canadian Film and Television Producers, the Canadian Film and Television Association, Quebec's Association des producteurs de films et de vidéo du Québec, and the National Film Board of Canada.

Talks are "still in the preliminary stages," according to Doug Coupar, director of Communications and Research at ACTRA.

ACTRA Performers' Guild executive director Ray Stringer admitted to "making some

progress, but not a great deal at this point."

There are two rounds of negotiations set to take place in February. Although Stringer said he expects a "successful resolution by the end of February," he noted that negotiations could be drawn out because the IPA has no full-time negotiator. "We've only had four full days of actual face-to-face with the Independent Producers."

Stringer declined to give details of the issues under negotiation, saying only that "we're asking for more."

One of the sticking points appears to be the share of the new lucrative video cassette market which will go back to the performers. Sales of material after the initial broadcast or theatrical release often involve

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