

Quebec/Europe station applies as specialty TV More money recommended for TF

OTTAWA — The best of Quebec and European French-language television programming will soon be available throughout Canada.

According to Alain Gourd, deputy minister of communications, a consortium of public and private broadcasters will file an application to the CRTC prior to the March 12 deadline for specialty services.

This consortium, consisting of every French-language broadcaster in Quebec as well as TVOntario, will establish TV5 in Canada — an existing international Francophone service distributed throughout Europe and originating in France.

Programming from France, Belgium, Switzerland and Quebec will be seen in Quebec on the basic cable service and on satellite to cable service throughout the rest of Canada.

Canadian participation in the service was agreed to in a protocol signed in early 1985 by the user countries and both the federal and Quebec governments.

In February 1986 at the Francophone summit in Paris, Canada proposed that the international Francophone service be distributed "step by step" throughout the world. North America was designated as the next step and Canada was mandated to achieve this goal, says Bourd.

"What we are trying to create is a Francophone audiovisual space," says Gourd.

Start-up funding for this full-fledged cable service will be contributed by the user countries. Gourd estimates that the initial Canadian contribution will be close to \$1 million.

MONTREAL — A new survey commissioned by Telefilm Canada has the executives there smiling. The DPA Group Inc. of Ottawa has reported great satisfaction in the private sector with the functioning of the agency, and has recommended that it be given additional funds — \$446 million over five years for the Broadcast Fund alone.

The report, written by DPA in conjunction with Secor of Montreal, was based on 150 questionnaires sent to TF's clients. It will be made public as soon as TF approves the text which accompanies its conclusions.

DPA found that funds disbursed by TF have a multiplying factor of 2.2 and that 75 percent of the projects funded by TF would not be undertaken at all without the help of the agency.

In commenting the results, TF administrator Yves Beauchesne said that TF is still in the business of taking risks.

"The projects which are expected to recoup their costs easily no longer come to Telefilm. We don't anticipate a lot in the nature of returns because Canadian programs and films can still not recoup in the Canadian market."

Beauchesne reported that the study also revealed a pro-regional bias, and he confirmed that TF tries to com-

pensate for the geographical difficulties of the regions by acting more quickly on requests from places other than Toronto and Montreal.

While TF, in principle, hopes to take only six weeks to process applications, Beauchesne reports that most projects currently take between seven and eight weeks to go through the system.

TVO French

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Many of those complaining said they felt there was no justification for another French channel in the Toronto market, he said. French station CBLFT, Channel 25, also serves Toronto.

Coulthard said, for example, some people complained of having to buy a converter for a second television set in order that it could pick up the Johnny Carson show on NBC.

"They were angry that now they would have to put out money for an American channel." But Coulthard added that anytime changes are made the company receives public reaction.

Vaughan, TVO's manager of corporate promotions, said one week after the new service started things were just about

back to normal. Between Dec. 29, 1986 and Jan. 5, 1987 TVO received about 620 calls from the public about La chaîne française, Vaughan explained.

TVO received many calls from people who don't understand that Ontario has a large French-speaking population; when that fact was explained, they understood the need for the service, she said. Vaughan also said others called who were opposed to any French programming. But after one week of programming TVO was receiving as many congratulatory calls as complaints, she said.

The federal and provincial governments have each agreed to chip in \$3 million a year for the next five years to support the French network.

The service is geared to meet the needs about 500,000 Ontarians whose mother tongue is French and another 500,000 with a working knowledge of the language.

Dubbers win

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"What I can tell you," says Gourd, "is that when the eldest daughter on **Little House on the Prairies** was pregnant, on the French side she was still in bobby socks."

The agreement, explains Gourd, is the result of an initial outcry from French-language broadcasters to improve the quality and quantity of Francophone services in Canada.

Part of the result was a co-production film treaty with France, a review of broadcast fund criteria and the distribution in Canada of the International Francophone Service or TV5 (see story). French-language broadcasters insisted, however, that the only way to repatriate French-language audiences would be to translate foreign programming.

One obstacle towards stepping up the availability of U.S. programming, which turned out to be easier than expected, says Gourd, was the degree of complicity by the three major

English-language networks in Canada. The three network heads were confronted with the question by the CRTC during license renewal hearings in the fall.

"The CRTC was nice enough to ask the question, quite spontaneously," says Gourd, "and the the three network heads were nice enough to agree."

Both Desjardin and Gourd say that although the American decision is evident of a strong sense of fairness there are monetary advantages and political trade-offs involved in the deal.

"Now that we have more French stations competing for a better product it will be more costly and they will move their product faster," says Gourd.

On the political side Gourd says sensitivity on this issue can be seen as an antidote to a more adamant position against the regulation of U.S. film distribution in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

"This may be their way of telling us that they are not bad guys right across the board," says Gourd.

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