

Masse gives strong endorsement to CBC Brief asks for more funds

TORONTO – In some of the strongest language yet, Marcel Masse, minister of Communications, reaffirmed the traditional Tory commitment to public broadcasting. Speaking before Ryerson film and television students on Mar. 26, Masse said that “the technologies apparent in broadcasting – such things as cable, satellites, video-cassette recorders – make a national public broadcaster more important than ever. Seventy-five per cent of our viewing time is spent watching American programs. But that does not mean that we should abandon our commitment to airing Canadian-made programs on our national television services. In fact, it means that a public, governmental commitment to providing a Canadian alternative is more important than ever.”

Although broadcast policies will be thoroughly reviewed in the coming months, he stated that “my government holds certain commitments which will not change: our commitment to the need for a national public broadcaster, to the service to the country that such a broadcaster must provide and our commitment to this country itself.”

Quoting the words of the Conservative prime minister, R.B. Bennett, who established the CBC in 1932, Masse noted that

Bennett’s “three principles – national sovereignty, equality of access and the airwaves as a national resource – are still in place today; are founded on our essential beliefs with respect to the role of government; and will not be forsaken by me or by the other members of our government. The commitment of our government to public broadcasting is unswerving and fundamental.”

Masse reiterated his support for CBC management and its president Pierre Juneau in particular. Quoting Prime Minister Mulroney’s speech to Parliament last November, Masse said “We have a high regard for Mr. Juneau and his accomplishments. That is a fact.”

In off-the-cuff remarks, Masse told his audience that Treasurer, Board officials last October wanted to cut the CBC’s budget by \$150 million. He said he convinced them that such an enormous budget reduction would severely affect the CBC’s role in the broadcast system. Masse said he was “optimistic” that CBC would be spared further cuts in the forthcoming budget, but noted that decision rests with Finance Minister Michael Wilson.

That evening Masse gave an abridged version of the speech to some of Canada’s leading developers and financiers at a reception marking the issuance

of the prequalification call for CBC’s Broadcast Centre Development Project. Hosted by Art Eggleton, mayor of Toronto, and Pierre Juneau, CBC president, the reception launched a \$500 million-dollar project which will see the consolidation of CBC’s English language production facilities on one site and the development of a multi-use site for commercial office, retail and residential/hotel uses. Located in downtown Toronto adjacent to Metro’s new convention centre and the proposed Dome stadium site, the project is “the largest urban development of its kind in North America,” said Janet Dey, director of planning and development for the Broadcast Centre Development project.

In an innovative move, CBC will lease the development site, which it owns, to a private developer who will finance and build the entire project. The CBC will lease back the broadcast and production facilities, thus becoming a major tenant.

Unresolved is how the CBC will finance the technical re-equipment which is estimated to cost \$100 million. Juneau told Cinema Canada that the money will come from the government. He said that the previous government had agreed to the financing but that the present government and the CBC have not had time to consider it. He added that the CBC has just resubmitted to the government its five-year capital budget.

When asked how the government could reconcile additional spending on CBC with its \$85 million cut including \$10 million cut in capital expenditures, Juneau said that “there is no contradiction between short-term cuts and long-term investment.” The capital expenditure for the Broadcast Centre would not start for another two years and would be spread over a five or six-year period.

CBC issued its pre-qualification call on Mar. 14. The call is the first in a two-stage competitive process to select a developer for the project. The purpose of the first stage is to arrive at a short list of developers with the experience, management expertise, financial capacity and imagination to undertake a project of the magnitude proposed. Developers have until May 30 to respond.

MONTREAL – Runaway box-office hit *La Guerre des tuques* has grossed \$832,333 in Quebec as of Mar. 7. After opening Mar. 1 in Toronto at five theatres, André Melançon’s kid flick grossed \$86,525 in three weeks. *La Guerre* opened Mar. 22 at one theatre in Hamilton, four in Edmonton and two in Winnipeg.

On Mar. 29, the film opened in Vancouver at four theatres.

TORONTO – In a brief to minister of Communications Marcel Masse, the Association of Television Producers and Directors, the CBC producers’ union, has recommended that “increased funding be committed to the CBC as the prime producer of Canadian programs and that the CBC be provided financing over a three-year period to allow it to undertake responsible program planning and growth and to acquire badly needed modern equipment compatible with the needs of the satellite age in communications.”

The document, entitled English Television in Canada: Response to Challenge, toned down some of the harsh rhetoric directed against the private production sector in a draft version reported in the last issue of Cinema Canada. While still challenging independent producers to prove themselves, the CBC producers concentrated on the question of Canadianizing television programming.

They recommend that Canadian content levels of at least 50% be achieved in public and private television by 1990. They asked that “a review of licensing standards for private broadcasters, be undertaken to

require them to increase their expenditures on original Canadian production.” In announcing changes to the Telefilm mandate Masse said Mar. 15 that he would be asking the CRTC to ensure that the private broadcasters make “a responsible commitment of air time and funds to the kinds of projects supported by the Fund.”

The CBC producers also recommended allowing pay-TV access to the Broadcast Fund. The producers urged Masse to establish an all-Canadian television network to be operated by CBC as a second network to “provide wider distribution of Canadian television programs both first-run and repeats.”

Finally, the producers asked that “discussion on the future of broadcasting in Canada should start with public hearings held by a Commons broadcasting committee or a Senate committee.”

New Jutra film out

MONTREAL – Since opening Feb. 15 at one theatre in Montreal, Claude Jutra’s *La Dame en couleurs* grossed \$29,953 in seven weeks. Distributor is Les Films René Malo.

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