

Disruption feared as Telefilm changes bosses

OTTAWA – One week after it was announced that Andre Lamy, Telefilm Canada's executive director, would be stepping down on Aug. 1 as head of the corporation, Peter Pearson resigned his post as director of the Canadian Broadcast Program Development Fund, effective June 1. The Pearson announcement, made on May 2, took the industry by surprise and the combined departures have spread concern about the ability of the corporation to maintain its efficiency during the shuffle at the top.

At presstime, André Picard, head of French production at Telefilm in Montreal, was rumored to succeed Pearson as head of the Fund, though Telefilm would not confirm the nomination.

In Montreal, industry feeling about Lamy's departure is that, although predictable given his Liberal ties and the will of the Conservative government to replace Liberal appointees to high-profile posts like the one at Telefilm, the timing couldn't have been worse. Both the Fund in particular and Telefilm in general had been functioning smoothly and the new policies were beginning to bear fruit. Apprehension was widespread that unless the government chooses someone with a strong private-industry experience in

film and television, the industry will have to undergo another waiting period while the new executive masters the intricacies of the industry.

These fears were echoed in Toronto, although attenuated by the belief that the new boss would come from the ranks of Toronto producers. The tradition at Telefilm is to have the top post alternate between Montreal and Toronto, and the rumored appointment of francophone Picard as head of the Fund suggests that an anglophone will be tapped to head the agency.

The announcement that Marcel Masse, minister of Communications, had asked Lamy to step down was made Apr. 23. The minister noted that the appointment is "at the pleasure of the Governor-in-Council" and so has no fixed term and can be terminated at the minister's discretion. Lamy has been Telefilm executive-director for five years.

"After five years, it is normal to shuffle people," Masse said in an interview. "It has nothing to do at all whether it is a Tory government or a Liberal government. What is annoying now is the fact that because it is a new government doing that, people suspect all sorts of things."

Telefilm Canada, formerly

the Canadian Film Development Corporation, assumed a major role in the production industry when it took on the administration of the Broadcast Program Development Fund in 1983. Funded by a 6% tax on the cable industry's revenues the Broadcast Fund has been a major booster of independent film production in Canada. Its current annual budget is \$68 million. Recently the Fund appeared to be on the verge of problems when the CBC, the major player in accessing the Fund, announced a freeze on independent productions as a result of an \$85 million cutback in its budget. The freeze prompted Communications minister Marcel Masse to introduce changes in Telefilm's mandate last month. It was Lamy who oversaw new policy directives to bring Telefilm in line with the changed mandate.

Masse said that during his term Lamy had "brilliantly accepted" the double challenge of strengthening the Canadian film industry and improving high-quality Canadian television programs.

A senior DOC official noted that Masse has been very pleased with his relationship with Lamy. However, Lamy is

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Fundamental change needed: broadcast review

TORONTO – Communications minister Marcel Masse Apr. 9 announced a long-awaited review of broadcasting policy. In a luncheon address jointly hosted by the Canadian Cable Television Association and the Broadcast Executives Society, Masse said that "changing technologies and economics, increased demand for services, increased competition face every broadcaster daily in the exercise of the profession. Yet that profession and that industry are obliged to function within the framework of legislation that is more than 17 years old. It is time for fundamental change."

He said he will be appointing a task force of "informed and thoughtful people to guide the review." He noted that the task force will undertake a fundamental review of the Canadian broadcasting system. He added, "policy for the Canadian broadcasting system cannot be de-

veloped piece-by-piece. The system is fragile – all its parts are interrelated. All parts of the system depend on each other for success. The activities and programs and investment plans of cable operators and conventional broadcasters and pay operators and educational broadcasters and specialty services all have economic effects on each other. And all these partners, taken together, are a single broadcasting system, charged with achieving certain cultural goals for the nation as a whole. For these reasons broadcasting policy must be comprehensive. It cannot simply adjust one or two of the pieces without considering the effect on the rest of the system."

The task force will undertake its mission through a series of closed-door meetings with all interested parties. At a background briefing with senior

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CRTC gets in act with own broadcast revision

TORONTO – Just days prior to Communications minister Marcel Masse's announcement of a task force to conduct an exhaustive review of broadcast policy which would include a look at the cable industry and the CRTC, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission chairman André Bureau announced that the CRTC will be undertaking its own major policy review of cable regulations. In a press release Apr. 4, Bureau said that the review, slated to begin hearings on Apr. 30, is an attempt "to remove obstacles through a more rigorous review of our own objectives. We intend to be rigorous in asking ourselves whether or not we can live without certain regulations and still achieve the desired ends. For example, the thrust of the CRTC's approach to cable rates is to speed up the process and still ensure fairness for cable operators and subscribers."

Bureau has taken a marked deregulatory thrust to the administration of the CRTC, particularly in relation to the demands of the cable industry.

Through its decision-making procedures the Commission has *de facto* been making broadcasting policy.

Its most recent policy decision has been the licensing of distant television signals. The creation of superstations which would be carried across the country by satellite and transmitted to the home by cable has been vigorously opposed by off-air broadcasters who fear audience fragmentation and the erosion of their advertising base. The CRTC decision can be reversed by an appeal to cabinet. Any interested party can appeal to cabinet as soon as a broadcaster is granted a superstation license.

Bureau noted that other issues to be discussed in the cable review are signal carriage priority, tiering arrangements, audio services, simultaneous substitution and subscription television.

While Masse and senior DOC officials were briefing the media about the forthcoming broadcast policy review, Bureau was telling the annual convention of the Canadian Cable Television Association

how he was strengthening the CRTC's policy making. He announced the introduction of a strategic planning branch under the direction of Doug Ryan. Bureau also said that he has created "specific units within the broadcasting directorate of the commission which will be exclusively concerned with and responsible for policy planning and development for the various regulated sectors of the broadcasting industry as a whole."

Masse denied that the CRTC was pre-empting his policy review. A senior DOC official said it was in the CRTC's "best interests not to make major policy decisions." He added that they must all "sing from the same song sheet." In the meanwhile, the official said, "the minister will not do anything to contravene his relationship with the CRTC under the existing legislative framework."

Masse noted that he introduced Bill C-20 last December which if passed by the beginning of 1986 will allow him to

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Task Force Guidelines

The Task Force shall make recommendations to the Minister of Communications on an industrial and cultural strategy to govern the future evolution of the Canadian broadcasting system through the remainder of this century recognizing the importance of broadcasting to Canadian life. The strategy will take full account of the overall social and economic goals of the government, of government policies and priorities, including the need for fiscal restraint, increased reliance on private sector initiatives and federal-provincial co-operation, and of the policies of the government in other related economic and cultural sectors. It will also take full account of the challenges and opportunities in the increasingly competitive broadcasting environment presented by ongoing technological developments.

The Task Force will examine and make recommendations on:

- appropriate public policy objectives for the Canadian Broadcasting system in the environment of the 1980's and 1990's, addressing specifically the government's cultural and economic priorities.
- the role and mandate of the national public broadcasting service and the private broadcasting sector, the scope of the provincial broadcasting services and the nature of their interrelationships in the current and future economic context.
- the demands and desires of the public with respect to the services provided by the broadcasting system including, but not limited to, the balance to be sought among national, regional and local services; the particular needs of anglophone and francophone audiences across the country; the needs of ethnic audiences; the needs of native audiences; and the specialized needs of other Canadians.
- the role of regulation and other policy instruments including, in particular, expenditures of public funds as effective and efficient means of achieving the objectives.
- means of reducing structural impediments to the broadcasting system's contribution to the Canadian economy and society.

In formulating its evaluation of the key factors and trends in the environment, the Task Force will consult with, and take into account the views of a wide range of interested groups and individuals.

The Task Force will submit its report to the Minister of Communications by January 5, 1986.

Special measures for West from Telefilm

VANCOUVER - With the fine-tuning measures to the Broadcast Program Development Fund announced by federal Communications minister Marcel Masse on Mar. 15, Telefilm Canada can as of Apr. 1 use up to 10% of its annual funding to support the development of scripts and production projects. Particular emphasis is being placed on developing eligible projects and scripts in the Atlantic and western provinces, for which some \$2 million have been earmarked.

In parched western Canada, where Telefilm's development programs include all points west of Winnipeg, the news couldn't come sooner. In the first year of Telefilm West's Script and Development Program, applicants totalled 16; of these, seven met with approval. Western applicants to the Broadcast Fund totalled six; of these, four were approved. By September 1984, the fund had accepted another four projects while the Development Program accepted eight. The one petitioner to the Equity Investment Program was rejected because funds weren't securely in place.

But after a hesitant start, things are beginning to pick up.

In Calgary, Telefilm recently backed a program called *Connecting*, which, in a variety/documentary format, deals with the problems of teenage youth.

In Alberta, the Script and Development Program Fund has just given support to *Whispering*, a made-for-TV movie that will be set in Vancouver, and deals with children.

Also accepted for the Development Fund is *Little David Play Your Harp*. This half-hour project is based on a Canadian short story set in Saskatchewan. Though the budget is small, a commitment from a regional broadcaster enabled the program to move into further stages of evolution.

Another Saskatchewan pursuit to receive Development funding is a project called *Break Up*, on the experiences of a family moving into a small town.

In Vancouver, a series called *Serendipity*, based on Persian fairy tales, has been accepted for Development money and will air on the CBC.

In Alberta, the Equity Investment Program will support a project called *Ranch*, which had no easily discernable slot. The ranch of the title was an artistic endeavour created out

of wood on several acres of land. Telefilm felt it was an important cultural work, needy of documentation and commemoration.

With a renewed emphasis on regionalism, the growing number of approvals has begun to put the west in a position to now encourage applicants.

Telefilm loses Lamy and Pearson: industry concerned

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coming to the end of a five-year term. The official said that Masse is continuing discussions with Lamy about a new role for Lamy after his term ends on July 31.

Lamy, a brother-in-law of CBC president Pierre Juneau, came to Telefilm from the CBC where he was vice-president audience relations. Prior to that, Lamy headed the National Film Board for five years. According to a senior DOC official, Lamy learned of his dismissal directly from Masse. Lamy was not available for comment.

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MICHAEL T. GEORGE
VICE-PRESIDENT, MARKETING

JACK F. MURPHY
VICE-PRESIDENT, ACQUISITIONS

(213) 850-3303

**3575 CAHUENGA BLVD. WEST
SECOND FLOOR
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90068**

Film Finances Canada
Finances-Films Canada

Pour tous renseignements:

Michael Spencer, Président

1001 DE MAISONNEUVE BLVD. WEST, SUITE 910
MONTREAL, QUEBEC H3A 3C8
TELEPHONE: (514) 288-6763