



# Canada Tries for Quality in New Services

Canada's regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, last month approved 10 new Canadian cable television services after considering 48 applications for new specialty, pay TV and pay-per-view services.

Canada has one of the highest rates of cable penetration in the world, with nearly eight million subscribers, and currently channel capacity is scarce. The regulator has licensed six English language and two French-language speciality services. The English language services are two documentary/information channels, two arts/drama channels, a country music channel, a service aimed at women and two classic movie pay TV channels; the French services are a 24-hour news and arts/entertainment.

Many of the new licensees claimed in their proposals that they would exceed the CRTC's standard 60 per cent Canadian content requirements. The CRTC calculates that they will spend altogether more than \$C518m on local productions over the next six years.

The CRTC is fighting a rearguard action to divert Canadian viewers from readily available American programming, particularly from US-sourced direct satellite broadcasts.

Critics say that the CRTC's selection is conservative in both ownership and programming terms (report in *Broadcasting and Cable's TV International*, 13 June). But CRTC chairman Keith Spicer said the CRTC's choices were aimed 'to ensure a strong Canadian presence in the coming multichannel universe'. They made up a 'diverse and attractive package.... with high-quality Canadian programming at a reasonable price' and presented 'important new opportunities for Canadian producers, creators and artists'.

Spicer said that the cost implications for consumers played an important role in the selection of licensees, along with financial viability (a crucial consideration given the disastrous history of Canadian cable in the early 1980s). □

## Remote Broadcasters Seek Program Swaps

Aboriginal-controlled commercial television licensee *Imparja* and the Queensland satellite service *QSTV* have asked the ABA for permission to deliver *Imparja* and *QQQ* television services into each other's areas, allowing viewers to have access to the two services.

The request was supported by local interests in the form of the *Nhulunbuy Corporation* and the *Longreach Shire Council*. The areas in question are *Alice Springs*, *Mt Isa*, *Nhulunbuy* and *Longreach* in the Northern Territory and far north Queensland.

Normally, proposals for additional services into these areas would be dealt with under the ABA's public planning process for remote areas, a process which is approaching completion. However, because of what it calls 'the merit of the requests' and because there is already an identified need for more services in remote areas, the ABA decided to undertake an investigation into this issue before it completed licence area plans for these locations.

It seems the two broadcasters who have made the application are not alone in wishing to increase the services into these areas. The ABA said that it had received expressions of interest from other independent and prospective service providers wanting to deliver new services into remote areas. □

## All About Telecommuting - At A Price

A recent publication, *Telecommuting Australia*, claims to be the first quantitative analysis of the prospects for telecommuting in Australia.

The sky's the limit, according to this publication, which contains estimates of the benefits from telecommuting such as a potential saving of 2.9bn km travelled, and 800,000 tonnes of carbon monoxide, a year if 20 per cent of the population worked from home.

*Telecommuting Australia* includes such information as

- definitions: what telecommuting means
- profile of the current Australian scene
- projections for future growth
- key issues, major interest groups
- enabling technologies
- environmental and planning issues
- new APS home based work interim award.

The authors, *Goanna Communications*, are a consultancy specialising in telecommuting strategies and policies for corporations and government and non-government agencies. The book is published by *Stuart Corner*, a well-known writer and commentator on communications issues. It is available for \$950 from PO Box 13 Rozelle NSW 2039; phone (02) 555 7377 or fax (02) 818 2294. □