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New broadcasting policy aims at expanding viewing choices

Communications Minister Francis Fox recently announced a new broadcasting policy for Canada designed to allow the nation's broadcasting system to respond to the technological and programming challenges of the 1980s and 1990s.

Four policy initiatives form the core of the broadcasting strategy. Mr. Fox said the government will: encourage the development of expanded programming choice for Canadian viewers, to be delivered primarily through cable-distribution systems but also by satellite; strengthen Canadian programming by establishing a fund to assist private production companies and independent producers; seek parliamentary approval of measures permitting the Cabinet to issue broad policy directives to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC); and relax licensing requirements to allow use of satellite earth-stations (TVROs) for television and radio reception by individuals, certain commercial establishments, and master antenna television (MATV) systems where approved by the CRTC.

"The situation is urgent and the time opportune for action in broadcasting," Mr. Fox said. "The broadcasting strategy for Canada will ensure that Canadian con-

tent is maintained and strengthened in the distribution of new programming services. It provides measures to increase the competitiveness of the Canadian broadcasting industry. And it represents a way of making sure that Canadian viewers, while enjoying greater program choice, will have assured access to programming that reflects Canadian cultural values."

Under the new measures, Canadians will have access, primarily through cable-distribution systems, to a wide variety of satellite-delivered programming from around the world and a range of existing and new Canadian programming services.

As the most economical means of extending new services to most Canadians, cable systems drawing both on satellites and conventional broadcasting will become a major vehicle for delivering the "information revolution" to Canadian homes. In addition to supplying an enhanced range of domestic and foreign broadcast signals, delivered on a "tiered" basis, cable operators will also be encouraged to provide the public with a range of new non-programming services — such as videotex, databank services, intrusion alarms, meter reading and Medic Alert, a health service.

Broadcasters will be encouraged to



In the new Canadian strategy for broadcasting the federal government has indicated that it would relax licensing arrangements which will allow the use of satellite earth stations (TVROs), such as this one, for television reception by individuals, commercial establishments and master antenna television systems.

