



Maple leaf design is created on a screen using the Telidon system.

is part of a total \$9 million in public funds allocated over the next four years for the further development and exploitation of Telidon by Canadian industry.

Communications Minister David MacDonald said that, while the Federal Government was supporting many other, smaller Canadian field trials of Telidon, "the reaching of this agreement with one of the world's largest, most technologically-advanced common carriers is the biggest milestone to date in the development of videotex services in Canada.

"It provides a tremendous boost to our efforts to show the world that Canadian videotex technology is the best available anywhere," he added. "We hope this co-operation between Bell and DOC will enable Canada to exploit fully this technological lead."

Bell Canada President J.C. Thackray stated that Bell had been "genuinely impressed by the Government's Telidon technology since its introduction". "Now that we have had the opportunity, during our Vista pilot project, to explore broader system design issues, we feel we are in a better position to apply this new technology to our service concept," he added.

Services available

With the use of a standard colour TV set, a pocket calculator-sized keypad (or optional full keyboard) and a small adapter to connect both to the subscriber's ordinary telephone line, Vista users will

have access to a host of visual information and communications services, such as constantly updated travel schedules, news, weather and sports headlines, stock market quotations, consumer bulletins, entertainment guides, classified advertisements and similar information; a variety of uses are envisaged including computer games, "teleshopping", travel reservations or a message centre.

Sales potential

Douglas Parkhill, Assistant Deputy Minister (Research), Department of Communications, said that negotiations were under way for sales of Telidon with: American Telephone and Telegraph Company, the biggest telephone firm in the United States; General Telephone and Electronics Corporation, the second largest; and with United Telecommunications Incorporated, another large company. Discussions are also taking place with three major U.S. television networks and the Public Broadcasting System, the U.S. educational television network.

Bell Canada's director of business development, Larry Wilson, said that, while the relatively complicated Telidon converters cost more than those using the simpler European technology, the price was expected to be reduced considerably. While each Telidon converter now costs about \$2,000 to manufacture, he said, Bell hoped that with advances in electronic technology and the economy of mass production, the cost would probably be cut to perhaps \$200 each in five years, allowing a basic Telidon service to be sold for \$10 to \$15 a month.

Information providers

The Bell Canada experiment with Telidon will bring together an increasingly information-oriented society with information providers — such as governments, airlines, news services and a potentially unlimited number of "electronic publishers" or information entrepreneurs — who can successfully give or sell their information "products" in the rapidly-emerging new information market place.

The Bell president said a variety of potential information providers had expressed interest in the company's interactive visual communications during the Vista pilot demonstration, many of whom would be participating in the field trial.

The schedule for the new Vista trial calls for conversion of the existing Bell

pilot system of Telidon capability by the end of this year. First installation of user terminals for the field trial is slated for September 1980. The trial itself will run throughout most of 1981. Most terminals — both user and provider — are expected to be located in Toronto, as will the data base computer, which will be accessible for demonstration purposes from other locations.

The forthcoming trial will monitor public reaction to the capabilities and potential of such a system, assessing human factors, technological aspects and the relative popularity of different information offerings. Given satisfactory results, the field trial may be expanded by Bell at a later date into a full market trial.

Purchases of terminals

The agreement reached by Bell and the Department of Communications includes the Government purchase and loan of 675 Telidon user terminals to the carrier, with Bell supplying another 325. Current plans call for 28 "information provider" terminals. The terminals will be built by Norpak Ltd., of Pakenham, Ontario, and other Canadian companies, possibly including Northern Telecom Ltd.

System design and implementation will be carried out by Bell Canada and Bell-Northern Research, in close consultation with the Communications Research Centre engineers who invented Telidon.



A keyboard is one of the methods used to retrieve information from a data bank or to create text or graphics for display on a home TV set or to send to another TV terminal on the system.