

France's

Ubi Soft

ENTERTAINMENT

establishes
multi-million dollar, multi-media studio
in
Montreal

In April 1997, Ubi Soft Entertainment S.A. of France, Europe's second-largest manufacturer of CD-ROM-based computer videogames, announced that it had chosen Montreal as the site of a major multi-media studio to serve as its production base for the U.S. and Canadian markets. Ubi Soft plans to invest \$400 million in the centre over ten years.

Interviewed by *Canada Investment News* six months later, Ms. Sabine Hamelin, Vice-President of Ubi Soft Divertissements Inc., the company's Canadian subsidiary, says Montreal was an ideal choice. The first advantage she lists is cultural: "The bilingual environment of Montreal," she says, "makes this the perfect bridge for a European company entering the North American market."

Another benefit, says Ms. Hamelin, is workforce quality, a crucial requirement in Ubi Soft's business. "We create products for very sophisticated and demanding customers. Meeting their requirements calls for a high level of creativity in a variety of fields, including graphic design, illustration, animation and software programming. By locating in Canada we have access to an impressively large

pool of people with these qualifications — and they are also closely in touch with North American tastes and trends."

Checking off another Montreal plus, Ms. Hamelin says: "Geographically, this location is ideal — close to and well connected with the United States market, and also conveniently positioned in relation to Europe."

Another attraction for Ubi Soft was a warm welcome from the federal and provincial governments, offered through an attractive array of investment incentive and job creation programmes.

Global teamwork

Ubi Soft Entertainment paints on a global canvas. The company creates its own videogames in 41 countries and also distributes other firms' products. In addition to Canada, Ubi Soft operates studios in France, China and Romania, all contributing

specialized skills to its final products: entertainment and educational videogames.

The new Montreal centre is part of this worldwide team and also has what it takes to develop and deliver products from scratch — including illustration, animation and integration.

By October 1997, the 22,000-square foot Montreal studio had more than 100 people on staff. It plans to employ 200 by April 1998 and expects that total to reach 550 by the year 2000. Ubi Soft has also signed an executive production contract with the German toy company Playmobil to produce three videogame lines: one for boys, one for girls and one for children in the pre-school age group. The company will be creating these products from start to finish in Montreal.

Summing up after six months of operation, Ms. Hamelin says: "Ubi Soft plans to be a major force in the North American videogame market. We are off to a good start." ♦



Sabine Hamelin, Vice-President of Ubi Soft Divertissements Inc., who heads operations in Canada, is also part of top management in the company's global organization. Ms. Hamelin joined Ubi Soft Entertainment S.A. in France in 1989 and, at age 26, became the Financial and Administrative Director for Ubi Soft International. In 1996 she organized the company's successful entry into the Paris Stock Exchange.



Ubi Soft Entertainment S.A. rang up sales of \$80 million in 1996. The company employs 531 people worldwide.



Ubi Soft produces, publishes and distributes over 1,000 products for videogame players. The company's top-ranking original creations include *POD*, a racing game featuring advanced Intel chip technology, *Rayman*, *Tim 7* (an educational CD-ROM

package) and *F1 Racing Simulation*. Riding the wave of success on these offerings, Ubi Soft was one of the first companies in its field to commit itself to development of networked games. Many of its videogames now have built-in Internet connectivity.