

# CRTC ruling opens market for local company

By **ROB KELLY**  
*The Champion*

The playing field has been suddenly levelled for a Milton-based satellite television company that will now have guaranteed access to major U.S. programming.

Tee-Comm Electronics vice-president of corporate development Ted Boyle said Monday that in the wake of a Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications (CRTC) decision favouring Canadian satellite firms, his company is poised to grow to 50,000 customers this year and 100,000 soon after. At present Tee-Comm has roughly 15,000 subscribers.

In the ruling the CRTC warned American broadcasters, for example CNN, that if they gave exclusive distribution rights to U.S. satellite firms to beam signals into Canada, they risked being dropped from the approved CRTC list of broadcasters.

While acknowledging that the CRTC essentially "had a gun held to the heads" of U.S. companies such as DirecTv, a Los Angeles subsidiary of Hughes Communications, Mr. Boyle termed the ruling "a defensible decision" because "no one should have exclusive rights" to market programming.

Tee-Comm Electronics manufactures satellite dishes and currently sells 18 program channels to mostly rural area subscribers not served by cable television. Company officials believe there's an untapped market of potential

## No sale on dump prices here

By **SAL BOMMARITO**  
*Special to The Champion*

Halton Region has no plans to follow the lead of neighbouring regional municipalities which have lowered dumping fees to attract more institutional-commercial-industrial (ICI) waste to their landfills.

In recent weeks, Metro Toronto, York and Durham dropped their so-called "tipping fees" from \$152 per tonne to \$90 per tonne to attract ICI waste. Peel Region has followed suit, lowering its fees from \$150 per tonne to \$80. Hamilton Wentworth scaled back from \$180 per tonne to \$72.

Halton currently charges \$150 per tonne for waste disposal at its Milton landfill. Regional treasurer Joe Rinaldo said Halton's waste management program relies on such user fees, because they reflect the full cost of conducting both waste reduction and disposal programs.

In other jurisdictions, municipal government waste disposal and reduction programs have been subsidized by ICI tipping fees, but that's not the case in Halton.

Due to the economic downturn, and low tipping fees available to ICI customers in the U.S., municipalities which rely heavily on ICI waste are scrambling to recover some of that business, Mr. Rinaldo said. Their solution has been to reduce tipping fees.

"It is precisely because of the subsidized rate structures in the neighbouring areas and the dramatic decline in their ICI tonnages that the move to lower tipping fees has been prompted," Mr. Rinaldo said.

Halton stands to lose more than it would gain by lowering tipping fees, he noted.

He said ICI waste constitutes only 10 per cent of total volumes at the regional landfill. That contrasts sharply with the pre-1989 ICI volumes, which exceeded 50 per cent of the total regional waste stream, he added.

ly one million Canadians for the service, which could, using newly developed technology, expand to 150 channels relayed from orbit to 2-foot wide receiver dishes.

Mr. Boyle was in San Francisco last week, and "got commitments from every one of the (U.S.) signal providers" that they were prepared to make distribution deals with Tee-Comm, he said.

The Milton firm has also "secured an option" with Telesat, the Canadian operator of the Anik satellites, to use more transmission facilities. That will mean between 48 and 60 channel sending capability, if all goes according to plan, within a year, and possibly 150 channels as more programming comes on line.

The latest satellite transmission technology allows for narrow-band signal sending, which means more channels can be packed into available satellites, and received by smaller home

dishes. That has set the stage for the 150-channel tv universe.

Tee-Comm plans on selling both the satellite and broadcast package as a rental agreement, so as to maintain "low upfront costs," Mr. Boyle said. While customers will "want this enhanced service", given the state of the economy, "people are reluctant to shell out \$1,000" to purchase one of the new satellite dishes and then pay for broadcasts.

By in effect renting both the dish and broadcast signals to buyers, "it'll be comparable to cable (tv) in a rural setting," Mr. Boyle noted. The price will be somewhat higher, probably around \$50 per month, but that would include specialty television, such as pay-per-view events.

One of the few drawbacks to the marketing strategy, at least in the short term, is that relatively expensive dishes are installed with long-term payback

from rental revenues, so the company's immediate financial status can be adversely affected, on paper.

Last year, for example, Mr. Boyle said Tee-Comm installed between \$7-8 million of "hardware" for customers "free", according to immediate balance readings. "We did it for the long-term revenue."

That explains the \$437,000 loss the company incurred last year on revenues of \$37.6 million, company officials say.

Tee-Comm plans a public issue this year to raise funds for system development, Mr. Boyle said. Currently shares trade around \$4.50, and touched \$5 for a 52-week Toronto Stock Exchange high in early June.

Tee-Comm employs approximately 40 people in Milton, and has probably spun off 500 more jobs through a dealer network across the country, Mr. Boyle said.



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