

Industry

SUDBURY: HOLLYWOOD FAR, FAR NORTH

When you think of Sudbury, cartoons don't immediately come to mind. Instead, you might think of the Big Nickel and the Stompin' Tom classic "Sudbury Saturday Night." But currently the city is trying to build a new image for itself, one that paints Sudbury as a town that has more to be proud of than simply its mining industry. One of the city's biggest new achievements are the jobs that have been created in Information Technology by inviting IT companies to base themselves in the city. One such company is March Entertainment, the creators of the new Canadian cartoon series *Chilly Beach*.

Cartoons for teenagers and adults have become some of the most popular and subversive television programming available over the past 10 years. American shows such as *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *King of the Hill* and more recently *The Family Guy*, are replacing sitcoms on our tubes. So it's about time Canada had one of its own. Targeted at the 13-to-30 demographic, *Chilly Beach* is set in a small resort town in the northern part of the country and is packed with all the Bob-and-Doug-like Canadiana you can think of. Poking fun at the stereotypes some Americans believe about Canada, the creators, Doug Sinclair and Dan Hawes, invented a town built on an iceberg where it's snowy year round. There's always an abundance of poutine and beer, and even the polar bears are polite. And don't forget about hockey. Dale MacDonald, the Zamboni-driving star of the show, is a big Montreal "Touartières" fan, while his best friend, Frank Shakleford, loves the Toronto "Ptarmigans". Yet somehow they still manage to keep their friendship alive. Only in a cartoon, you might say.

The *Chilly Beach* crew hit the big-time last year after six years of producing episodes exclusively on their Web site. CBC-TV picked up the series for one season, and with decent audience figures, has renewed it for another. According to the CBC's Web site, this is the first time the network has ever taken on a program that was originally developed for the Internet. The show is currently on hiatus while the creators put together another batch of episodes to be aired in the second half of its first season in April. According to executive producer Hawes, the show has been getting great feedback; however, this success was a long time coming. He struck a deal with Salter Street Films to produce a television show from the Web site to be aired on Teletoon, but when Alliance Atlantis purchased Salter Street in 2001, changes were made and the show was dropped.

This is where Sudbury stepped in. The city invited March Entertainment to use the new Sudbury Technology Centre as a base for its animation studio. *Chilly Beach* is the studio's only production at the moment, but they are looking for more. Currently the studio remains nameless. Hawes, however, thinks they should call it "something like Hollywood Far, Far North." In further support of the show, Jim Gordon, the mayor of Sudbury until last December, declared the first week in September 2003, Animation Week, and the four radio stations in Sudbury cosponsored an event at the local Imax to debut the first episode of *Chilly Beach*. Understandably, Hawes speaks highly of the city. "Sudbury is awesome...and it's a dry cold."

With a similar look and small town feel to that of *South Park*, this slightly more innocent program is already getting rave reviews. Grant McIntyre of *The Globe and Mail* wrote that *Chilly Beach* is "one of the funniest shows anywhere." If the new generation of hosers agree, Sudbury could become the next hot spot in the Great White North.

CHILLY BEACH



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