

Montrealer has big plans for his crime-fighting channel

FEATURES POLICE-WANTED BULLETINS

Wants Avis de Recherche TV to become mandatory for Canada's cable operators

JAN RAVENSBERGEN
THE GAZETTE

Vincent G racitano, 45, is on a crime-busting mission with national ambitions – and a lot of obstacles in front of him.

This stubborn Montrealer already feeds police-wanted bulletins, around the clock to more than 585,000 Quebec households.

Most of his stars are petty criminals on the lam.

They include burglars, fraud artists, parole violators and a perpetual parade of other small-time fugitives and miscreants,

the kind of people who prey on the public and prosper by shunning the spotlight.

In October 2004, G racitano's Avis de Recherche TV made its first breakthrough.

It elbowed its way on to Channel 46, on the basic service bundle of Vid otron's Illico digital network when it was already hooked up in about 300,000 Quebec homes. Illico's reach has doubled during the past two years – and G racitano's with it.

To liven things up, Avis de Recherche has just launched a series of half-hour hosted seg-

ments from a new studio put together on a shoestring.

G racitano is ready for the next step: He wants to go national.

Operating in English as All Points Bulletin TV, he plans to use the same formula to distribute localized criminal-search photos and rap sheets in each major Canadian city.

He's asked his service to be declared a must-carry for cable operators across the country, the same way the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and the Cable Public Affairs Channel are mandatory.

Avis de Recherche TV, which also features missing-persons reports and public service announcements, pulls in about 200,000 viewers a month, Bureau of Broadcast Measurement ratings indicate. Advertiser support has proven disappointing,



ALLEN McINNIS THE GAZETTE

Vincent G racitano at Montreal recording studio for Avis de Recherche.

however, G racitano said, and the channel must be designated mandatory if it is to survive.

"All the application's details will become public once we publish a notice for a public hearing" in the next few months, said Nicolas Falardeau, a spokesper-

son for the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, which would rule on G racitano's request.

G racitano wants 8 cents a month for each cable subscriber to the French service, and 6 cents a month from the English-side.

G racitano established Avis de Recherche in anger after a frustrating encounter with Montreal law enforcement. He was victimized by burglars in spring 1999; but when G racitano offered police incriminating security tapes of the robberies in progress, they refused even to look at the evidence: "They told me they really couldn't do anything with them."

Thanks to G racitano, those days are over.

Exposing small-time criminals and thugs to public exposure answers a crying need, he added. "I don't pretend to be Hollywood. But a safe neighbourhood is everybody's business."

On the Web:
www.avisderecherche.tv

janr@thegazette.canwest.com