

Help the WGC Fight Content Guidelines for Film & Television Labour Tax Credit Eligibility

“For those who suggest that is censorship, I suggest rather that is the will of the people of Canada.” – Finance Minister Jim Flaherty to the Senate Standing Committee on Banking Reviewing Bill C-10, April 30, 2008.

Will you or Won't You? Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said that the amendment to the production tax credit contained in Bill C-10 is “the will of the people.” Does a government imposition of content guidelines on Film & Television reflect your will?

Divide to Conquer: Minister Flaherty said that the film and television industry in Canada is divided on the issue. It is not. As Senator Goldstein rightly pointed out to Minister Flaherty, representatives from the film & television industry including the WGC, appearing before Senate and speaking elsewhere, are completely united in their opposition to the drafting of guidelines by which their productions would be scrutinized for content potentially “contrary to public policy.”

Preferential treatment: Why can American or foreign productions coming to Canada produce whatever they want and remain eligible for tax credits, when Canadian productions would have to meet content requirements? The proposed legislation is discriminatory, and puts Canadian production at unfair disadvantage.

In a reply to one of the Facebook writers, M.P. Vic Toews argues that: “This [Bill] is about ensuring that taxpayers’ money is not used to finance material that is pornographic, excessively violent or denigrating to identifiable groups. These guidelines were already used by the government, has all party support and this is to make it official. It will not in any way interfere with the creation of vibrant Canadian content. The movies we go to see at theatres and film festivals will continue to be eligible for tax credits under these guidelines. This is only to guarantee that your tax dollars are not used to finance child pornography, for example.”

But if the guidelines are as yet unwritten, and if their drafting, re-drafting and enforcement is at the discretion of the sitting Minister of Heritage , how can such assurances be made?

Without this certainty, the financing of film and television in Canada becomes even more precarious. Tax credits are an essential part of the financing equation and the securing of interim financing – introduce uncertainty and you shut down productions before they can even start.

For this reason, we encourage you to write your MP, and any or all of the people below, and tell them (however briefly) that you oppose section 120 in Bill C-10. Keep the pressure on. Let them know there is a simple solution to answer Minister Verner’s concern: simply eliminate the reference to guidelines in the amendment, and define ‘contrary to public policy’ as any unlawful content prescribed in the Criminal Code of Canada.

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And find your local MP at

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>

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