

Bloc Québécoise

Policy Statement – Film Sector

For improved financing of Quebec films

Since its creation on April 1st, 2001, the Canada Feature Film Fund, with a budget of a little over \$100 million, has aimed at increasing audiences for Canadian feature films shown in theatres, so that these films can obtain a 5 % market share in Canada.

In order to help achieve this, development, production and marketing programs (the Main Programs) support the production and marketing of Canadian feature films with solid box office potential, with recognition of the importance of a diversity of genres, budgets, companies and regions.

In 2004, a third of the Fund was dedicated to film production in Quebec, with the balance going to productions in the rest of Canada. However, in terms of box office and related revenues, we witnessed the opposite situation: two thirds of those revenues came from Quebec, while the remaining third was generated in the rest of Canada. Further, Quebec films made up 21% of box office receipts, while the market share for Canadian films across the country, including Quebec, stood at a mere 4.6%.

We can thus conclude that the Canada Feature Film Fund, the goal of which is to increase attendance for Canadian films, has been successful in this regard only in Quebec, where audiences strongly support their home grown cinema. On the other hand, it seems rather unjustified that a fund based on performance wouldn't grant Quebec its fair share of the financing budget.

The Bloc Québécois believes that said share should be increased, especially in light of the budget freeze for the Short Film Fund and an increase in production costs that led, in 2006, to a crisis in the financing of Quebec films.

The Bloc Québécois also calls for the Fund to be increased by \$50 million, \$20 million of which should be allocated to Quebec films.

Moreover, while an increase in the financing of works of fiction is required, the amounts allocated to documentary features are clearly insufficient. The Bloc Québécois thus calls for the creation of a specific fund for feature documentary productions, with an annual budget of \$10 million.

Furthermore, financing for art house films (*cinéma d'auteur*) should also be increased. While granting funds based on performance may stimulate ticket sales at the box office, it does little to support the next generation of filmmakers or encourage artistic creation.

That is why the Bloc Québécois calls for the creation of a fund for documentary features and for Imax films, and the way these funds are allocated should reflect the cultural habits of Quebecers.

Finally, the Bloc Québécois believes it is essential that a tax credit for films shot and produced outside the Montreal metropolitan area be implemented, in order to facilitate the development of a filmmaking community throughout Quebec. Such a tax credit has already been implemented by the government of Quebec through the Sodec.

For an improved financing of artistic creation

In order to improve financing for artists and creators, the Bloc Québécois has for three years been calling for the federal government to noticeably increase the annual budget of the Canada Council for the Arts, in order to bring it to \$300 million.

The Council would then be able to substantially increase the number and amount of its individual grants to artists, as well as the sums granted to various organizations. Such an initiative would provide an increase both in the number of cultural works produced and in the income of artists, tradespeople and cultural workers.

On November 23rd, 2005, a few days before an election was called, the Liberal Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that the budget for the Canada Council for the Arts would be increased to \$300 million. Unfortunately, the Conservatives backed away from such a commitment and instead the annual budget was only increased by \$30 million.

The Bloc Québécois will keep calling for an increase in the Canada Council for the Arts' budget so that it reaches \$300 million.

For improved support of art creators

The work of artists in Quebec and Canada is precarious and, more often than not, their revenue stream is characterized by one occasional lump sum received for work that is spread over long periods of time.

The proportion of self-employed workers in the cultural sector is more than two and a half times greater than in the rest of the active population (27.4% vs. 10.4%). Artists thus find themselves in a particularly precarious economic situation. Further, between 1991 and 2001, the number of workers in the Quebec cultural sector increased by 23.9%, according to a January 2005 study from the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

Considering the precarious status of artists and professionals in the areas of culture and communications, the Bloc Québécois believes it is urgent to act now. It thus calls for the federal government to introduce a five year tax averaging system pertaining to the income of artists. Such a measure is already in place in several other countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom and others. It allows artists to better deal with the fluctuations of their income, and it also reflects more adequately the nature of their remuneration.

The Bloc Québécois intends to table legislation allowing for the averaging of an artist's income over a period of five years.

Furthermore, it is a well known fact that the status of tradespeople in the television, film and cultural sectors is precarious, and that their income fluctuates greatly. What's more, because of their status as self-employed workers, over 25% of people working in the cultural sector don't have access to the unemployment insurance system.

The Bloc Québécois finds it distressing that such a system hasn't been adapted to reflect the atypical situation of self-employed workers, who nevertheless represent 16% of the active population.

The Bloc Québécois thus tabled Bill C-269, which proposed that a voluntary participation system for unemployment insurance be set up for self-employed workers. However, the legislation wasn't passed.

This initiative is similar to a recommendation submitted by the Human Resources Committee in February 2005, whereby the government would consider the establishment of a framework that would allow for the unemployment insurance system to extend to self-employed workers.

The Bloc Québécois will keep calling for the government to establish a framework allowing the unemployment insurance system, including regular as well as special benefits, to extend to self-employed workers, many of whom are cultural tradespeople.

For the respect of copyright

The Copyright Act does not take in consideration the impact of new technologies such as the Internet, and it must be modified as soon as possible. All types of work deserve compensation, and so artistic creators must be paid their due. We must also make sure that consumers enjoy the benefits of this new doorway to creative work.

Currently, illegal downloading penalizes artists, since they receive no compensation for their work, while Internet service providers are the only ones benefiting from the work of others.

Bill C-61, which was tabled by the Conservatives in June 2008, does not in any way make the industry aware of its responsibilities, aiming instead at punishing consumers – yet those same consumers actually pay the industry for their access to the Internet.

The Bloc Québécois will ensure that the new Copyright Act will be fair and will not penalize artistic creators or consumers.

Finally, it goes without saying that the Bloc Québécois will continue to defend the artistic freedom of creators and will oppose any legislation aimed at limiting or censoring such freedom.