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## Mayor Kelly joins fight over film funding

Halifax mayor: Content of films shouldn't factor in funding call

By DEVIN STEVENS

Halifax's mayor is supporting the film industry's fight to stop the federal government from revoking tax breaks of offensive films, saying the proposed legislation threatens the industry with economic uncertainty and censorship.

"The content or subject matter of a film should not influence whether or not it receives a tax credit," Mayor Peter Kelly said in a recent letter to the Senate standing committee reviewing the legislation.

"(Bill C-10) introduces too great a degree of subjectivity, leading to a possible future where individuals or governments could deny tax credits for productions that simply do not conform to their own ideals and preferences."

Mr. Kelly said the legislation would put Halifax productions such as Trailer Park Boys and This Hour Has 22 Minutes in jeopardy, damaging the city's economy and robbing the culture of controversial art.

The changes to the Income Tax Act would allow the heritage minister to revoke government tax credits of a film or TV show "contrary to the public policy." There are no guidelines about what would be considered offensive, leaving the question of taste and decency to the judgment of the minister.

"There's a type of Bible-belt constituency that got to this government and said: 'We must stop this. Government money, in anyway, should not go into anything but Anne of Green Gables,'" said Michael Donovan, chairman and CEO of DHX Media Ltd. and executive producer of This Hour Has 22 Minutes.

"Where are the guidelines? Where are the limits? The government is saying, 'Well, trust us. We'll bring those in eventually.' The industry is very, very suspicious."

Mr. Donovan said the definition of offensive material could change on the whims of future governments. He said because the decision will be made after a film is completed, banks will not finance risky projects. Many independent films rely on government funding, meaning the bill will effectively put an end to controversial films.

"The financial model crumbles in this case," he said. "The banks in Canada have said we can not finance films that have any chance (of losing their tax credit)."

Mr. Kelly said Nova Scotia's film industry is the fourth largest in Canada, employing more than 2,000 people and pumping \$100 million into the local economy.

Charles McVety, president of Calgary-based Canadian Family Action Coalition, supports the bill and said films like Young People F---ing shouldn't get tax breaks.

"Nobody's passing laws saying they can't make pornographic films," Mr. McVety said.

"(But) don't expect Joe Taxpayer to drain money out of their family budget so Mr. Porn King can make his movie."

Mr. Donovan, who has argued his case in front of the Senate committee, said almost all countries subsidize film. Direct support comes from investment by groups like Telefilm Canada and is largely based on things like cultural merit.

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CHARLES McVETY Canadian Family Action Coalition

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