



WOMEN IN FILM
AND TELEVISION
VANCOUVER

2023 British Columbia Budget Consultation Speech

Hi, my name is Eli Morris, my pronouns are they/them and I'm thankful to be here speaking with you on x^wməθkwəyəm, Skwxwú7mesh and Səlilwəta?/Selilwitulh Territory. I'm the Executive Director of Women in Film and Television Vancouver, a member-based non-profit, founded in 1989.

I am presenting three recommendations for you today, which I've distilled from decades of advocacy work from my colleagues and predecessors.

We recommend the Minister of Finance:

1. Enact an equity requirement for BC's Motion Picture labour based tax credits.
 - a. This equity requirement would advance work opportunities for people who are persistently marginalized or excluded from good paying jobs in BC's thriving film industry. This includes people who are Indigenous, racialized, disabled, 2SLGBTQ+ and women.
2. Implement a 'record and report' requirement on the demographic distribution of the funds disbursed through the tax credits.
 - a. The reporting of data-driven evidence fulfills multiple functions. Activists use the data to present strategic and actionable insights to industry stakeholders, organizations, funders and broadcasters; and policy-makers and funders are held accountable.
3. Invite WIFT Vancouver and other advocacy groups to participate in the annual Finance Committee Review of the film industry tax credits.
 - a. To our knowledge, no under-represented workers in the film industry have ever been invited to that meeting.



WOMEN IN FILM
AND TELEVISION
VANCOUVER

Some background: In 2020, the BC film and television industry attracted \$3.4 billion dollars in direct spending to the provincial economy. The province supports this film production through the Film Incentive BC and Production Services tax credit programs. They have propelled and maintained BC as the third largest centre in North America for film production. It's a wonderful success story. But only for a small demographic of workers. These programs have been in place since the late 1990s and are ripe for modernization.

For the last 17 years, advocacy groups have released many studies which all point to the same issue: in spite of being heavily subsidised by tax credits, the labour force in the Canadian film industry is not representative of the demographics of Canadian society.

A 2021 report issued by our allies at the Racial Equity Media Collective states "Provincial and federal tax credits make up the largest single source of all funding going to the industry. 28% of \$3 billion (and within that amount provincial tax credits make up 38% of all public funds). However they are not subject to any equity-related standards, incentives or eligibility, making them the biggest equity omission in the system. This ultimately means that BIPOC Canadians who pay taxes are financing their own exclusion." Yikes.

The good news is that we are in a terrific position to fix this!

If you take a look at Creative BC's 2019 Labour Market Information Study of the Film industry, you will once again see huge inequalities in hiring and representation of women and racialized workers but ALSO the fact that the industry is rapidly expanding at a time when the workforce is ageing out due to retirements. With the current increase in demand for workers we have a unique opportunity to correct historic wrongs.

In 2019 we teamed up with UBCP/ACTRA, the union representing film and television performers, and met with Creative BC (who administer the BC tax credits) to work on possible models for modernising the tax credit. The summary is there's interest, and it's doable.



WOMEN IN FILM
AND TELEVISION
VANCOUVER

Our allies at UBCP/ACTRA also presented on this topic two years ago, which lead to this recommendation in the 2021 Budget Consultation Report: to “explore measures, such as tax credits or hiring incentives, to address inequities and barriers for underrepresented groups in the arts, culture, and digital media industry.”

Over the years we’ve also met with the current and former Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity Mitzi Dean and Grace Lore. There’s loads of interest there, which is why I’m here today.

There’s also now some international precedent for this type of legislation—California has just passed equity tax credit legislation in an effort to make Hollywood reflect California’s diversity. That’s Bill 144 if you’re interested.

I’m going to finish with a quote from my colleague Doreen Manuel, a Secwepemc/Ktunaxa film-industry leader, advocate and WIFTV Board Member:

“When you examine the amount of funding equity tax credits would amount to, it is fractions of pennies in comparison to the amount of funds raised from resource extraction on Indigenous territories, particularly in BC on unceded territories. I’m asking you to consider that truth when examining the potential for creating a more equitable tax credit system.”

Thank you for your time.