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## **NOVA SCOTIA FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRIES DEVASTATED BY PROVINCIAL BUDGET**

Nova Scotia's film and television industries are reeling this afternoon, after the Province's Finance Minister delivered an austerity budget in which their industries were directly targeted. The Film Tax Credit program, which has helped build the sector since 1995 has been dramatically re-shaped, to the point where local producers say Nova Scotia will no longer be a viable place to do film and television business.

"It took 20 years of careful building for this industry to become the success it is today. In her budget speech, the Finance Minister took about 20 minutes to demolish it," says Marc Almon, Chair of Screen Nova Scotia, an industry organization that represents people who work in the film, television and digital media sectors.

"The government has killed the Nova Scotian industry – that may not have been their intention but that's what they have done," says Michael Donovan, Executive Chair of Halifax-based DHX, one of Canada's largest media production, distribution and broadcasting companies.

Almon says: "This government was elected after they made a clear and firm commitment to maintain the Film Tax Credit program until 2020. That was a welcome message, which helped create confidence, and spur production. And now they do this? Technically, the tax credit is still on the books. But they have gutted it so much they may as well have eliminated it. It is bewildering how they could have come to such a decision. It makes no sense."

In the past two decades, Nova Scotia's film and television industries have grown dramatically. The tax credit program is used to help offset the cost of labour, and is a tool that producers use to attract international productions, as well as to create indigenous programming. The sector has grown from \$6 million annually in economic activity in 1995, to more than \$140 million last year. Nova Scotian productions have garnered hundreds of national and international awards, and the province's technical crews enjoy a stellar reputation.

"The incentives have worked. More than 2,000 Nova Scotians work full time in the screen industries. Today is a game-changer," says Almon. "What about all the young writers, directors, producers, animators, actors, and technicians that have been educated and trained here? They will leave. Isn't this exactly what we're trying to avoid?" Almon added.

Big Motion Pictures Limited, a 20-year employer of some of Nova Scotia's best film technicians, is already looking for alternate locations for their 2015 production slate. "We are forced to explore options for company headquarters for 2016 and beyond," said Big Motion Pictures President David MacLeod late this afternoon.

Television and film producer Mike Volpe of Topsail Entertainment, the producer of the hit CBC series Mr.D., is now looking at alternative locations for any projects slated for later this year and into 2016. "We want to film here. We have created a hit show here. We plan to keep making it. Sadly, it looks like it won't be feasible to continue shooting here," says Volpe.

In the past two weeks there has been much dismay in the film and television industry over the lack of consultation involved in the NS government's revision of the tax credit program.

Michael Donovan expressed his frustration this afternoon. "The NS government doesn't understand the impact. Fundamentally, they have made the NS film tax credit un-bankable in Canada. You can bank a

refundable tax credit but you cannot bank a non-refundable one. That's the key to complicated international financing," says Donovan.

More than 50 documentary, film and television projects have been completed recently with the assistance of the NS Film Industry Tax Credit, including the internationally-renowned *Book Of Negroes*, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, *Mr. D.*, *Heartbeat*, *Inspector Gadget*, *The Trailer Park Boys*, *Haven*, *Forgive Me*, *Relative Happiness*, *Hope for Wildlife*, *Call Me Fitz*, *The Halifax Comedy Fest*, and *Lizzie Borden*.

For more information, or to arrange interviews, please contact Tara McClair, Screen Nova Scotia, 902 229 3793

For more information about Screen Nova Scotia, see: <http://www.screennovascotia.com/>