

Welcome to the Club

Film B.C.

by Calvin Wharton

British Columbia filmmakers are generally pleased with the province's new film fund, Film B.C., but continue to take a wait-and-see attitude.

The fund will invest up to \$10.5 million of Lottery Funds in B.C.'s indigenous film industry over the next three years and will provide support for script development, pre-production, production, promotion and distribution, non-theatrical production, and professional development.

"Film B.C. is a step in the right direction," says filmmaker and president of the B.C. Film and Video Industry Association, Chris Bruyère. "It's not everything we need, but it will help B.C. filmmakers to produce films."

The major concern here seems to be that money from the fund will wind up in the hands of U.S. film companies. As Ray Hall of Petra Films, a Vancouver production company, says, "My only anxiety is that some perversion of the qualifications will fund U.S. films. If in a devious way a token, so-called 'Canadian' production can access Film B.C., my worst fears will be realized."

"The fund should only be to support and encourage B.C.-based, Canadian productions,"

Bruyère agrees. "At its best it will do for B.C. what film funds in other provinces, such as Quebec and Alberta, have done — take away some of the foothold Ontario has on Canadian filmmaking."

Tom Howe of Thomas Howe Associates, a television, home video and film distributor, is pleased the fund has provisions for promotion and distribution. "Local distributors originally didn't think there would be anything in the fund for us, so we lobbied for that component."

Still, he claims the money available for distribution doesn't come close to that in Ontario and Quebec.

The person responsible for investing the Film B.C. money is no stranger to British Columbia filmmaking; Wayne Sterloff left his job as regional manager of Telefilm Canada to head the new organization. Within days of his appointment the search for key executives was underway and, in fact, should be completed by the time this goes to press. He told *Cinema Canada* that senior staff would be hired by mid-October and everyone else should be at their desks by November 1. What follows are the basic guidelines for Film B.C. projects as formulated by the agency:

Introducing Film B.C.

Film B.C. will administer the Province's Film Development Fund to stimulate the growth of a B.C.-based and controlled motion picture industry. This will complement the success the industry has had in attracting extra-provincial projects to British Columbia.

Film B.C. will commit up to \$10.5 million over the next three years to B.C. motion picture projects. This investment is estimated to result in \$42 million in new production activity and create up to 600 new short-term production jobs each year. Establishment of the Fund will also assist British Columbia producers to secure a fair share of private investment and federal assistance. British Columbia intends to be a key and aggressive player in the industry through Film B.C.

Film B.C. grows out of a pro-

cess of consultation with individuals, industry associations and unions and a major study. Elements of the many briefs, submissions and proposals have helped shape the initial programs to be offered by Film B.C.

Film B.C. is firmly committed to the B.C. industry and to B.C. talent. The initial programs will provide support for:

- script development
- pre-production
- production
- promotion and distribution
- non-theatrical production
- internships for professional development.

This comprehensive and balanced package of support programs will be phased in throughout the balance of 1987.

Script Development

Film B.C. will assist eligible applicants to develop viable motion picture concepts into working screen plays.

Eligible costs may include option fee (other than to applicant), writing fees, research, travel, typing and copying costs.

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible, the screen writer, or at least 50 per cent of the active writers if more than one, must be a Canadian Resident (a landed immigrant or Canadian citizen) who has been resident in British Columbia for at least 12 months.

Applicants must have demonstrated relevant professional experience and have had a minimum of at least one work professionally produced for film, television or a related medium.

Financial Participation

- a) Film B.C. will provide direct loans at prime plus one percent to individual screenwriters or in certain cases, to filmmakers.
- b) Normally, Film B.C. will participate in a script's development, treatment to first draft, up to one-third of eligible script writing costs to a maximum of \$10,000 per project.
- c) Preference will be given to projects based on original literary works of British Columbia authors.
- d) Loans for script development will be repaid to Film B.C. in full on the first day of principal photography or on the optioning, sale or transfer of the screenplay to any third party.

Applications for script development assistance will be considered following October 1, 1987.

Pre-production Assistance

Film B.C. will assist eligible applicants to undertake the entire process of development of a motion picture production, from the creative and planning stages through to the completion of project financing.

Eligible expenses may include:

- optioning and purchase of literary material excluding transactions which are not "arm's length"

- production and market research

- legal, accounting and consulting services

- packaging, financing, marketing and other related consultant and professional expenses

- project-related overhead and office expenses

- travel, casting, contracting and location scouting

- prospectus preparation.

Eligible Applicants

Production companies must be incorporated federally or in British Columbia, and must have had their head office and principal place of business in B.C. for at least 12 months in the preceding three years. Share corporations must have a majority of voting shares beneficially owned by B.C. residents.

Priority will be given to projects which spend at least 75 per cent of salaries and 75 per cent of budget for services in British Columbia, except in the case of approved co-productions where terms are negotiable.

In all instances, applicants must demonstrate actual as well as technical control over the project to the satisfaction of Film B.C.

Applicants must have demonstrated relevant professional experience and have had a minimum of at least one work professionally produced for film, television or a related medium.

Financial Participation

Film B.C. will advance direct loans at prime plus one per cent to successful applicants, and will insist on other development financing elements to a level satisfactory to Film B.C.

Film B.C. will participate in any stage of a project's development, to a cumulative total of \$35,000, which will normally represent no more than 10 per cent of total pre-production budget, including screenplay development.

Loans will be repayable in full to Film B.C. on the first day of principal photography, or on the optioning, sale or transfer of the project to any third party.

Applications for pre-production assistance will be considered following October 1, 1987.

Production Assistance

Film B.C. will assist in the production financing of a fully developed motion picture or television program through equity investment or loan.

Eligible Projects

Project categories are "long form" (not less than 75 minutes per episode, normally intended for commercial release), and "short form", (under 75 minutes per episode).

Production assistance is NOT available under this program for: sports events; news or documentaries; current affairs; educational programs for the non-theatrical market; industrial or sponsored films; commercials.

Eligible Applicants

Production companies must be incorporated federally or in British Columbia, and must have had their head office and principal place of business in B.C. for at least 12 months in the preceding three years. With share corporations, a minimum of a majority of voting shares must be beneficially owned by B.C. residents.

Priority will be given to projects which spend at least 75% of salaries and 75% of budget for services in British Columbia, except in the case of approved co-productions where terms are negotiable.

Applicants must demonstrate actual as well as technical control over the project to the satisfaction of Film B.C.

Applicants must have demonstrated relevant professional experience and have had a minimum of at least one work professionally produced for film, television or a related medium.

Long Form

Film B.C. will participate only in those projects that have firm financial guarantees and release commitments from theatrical distributors, broadcasters or pay-TV services.

Sufficient financial commitments to complete the proposed project must be demonstrated, with a level of financing from the private sector satisfactory to Film B.C., and normally a guarantee of federal government assistance.

Film B.C. will advance pro-

duction financing normally by way of equity investment, although it may choose to proceed by way of an interest-bearing loan at prime plus one per cent. Approved projects will be eligible for up to \$500,000, to a maximum of 25 per cent of total production expense.

Short Form

Film B.C. will participate in only those projects that have either a firm financial guarantee or release commitments from a theatrical distributor, or a firm commitment from a broadcaster or pay-TV service in the form of a pre-license for broadcast, together with sufficient guarantees or pre-license payments.

Film B.C. will advance production financing normally by way of equity investment, although it may choose to proceed by way of a loan at prime plus one per cent, or loan guarantee. Approved projects may be eligible for a maximum of \$25,000, which should represent no more than one-third of the total production budget.

Applications for production assistance will be considered following **December 1** for **Long Form** projects and following **November 1** for **Short Form** projects.

Promotion and Distribution

Film B.C. will assist B.C.-based distributors and distribution companies to market and promote B.C.-produced films.

Eligible expenses include media advertising in magazines, trade papers, etc., or for travel and presence at trade fairs and film markets relating to the release and/or exhibition of B.C.-produced films.

Eligible Applicants

This program is open to distributors or qualifying sales agents, and under exceptional circumstances, producers may apply. Companies must demonstrate proven ability and sufficient experience in the distribution of film or feature films and/or television productions.

Financial Participation

Assistance will be in the form of direct loans at prime plus one per cent.

Assistance is based on a maximum of \$3,500 per individual project on a matching basis, to a cumulative total of \$75,000 per client over three years.

Loan repayment will be based on prearranged negotiations, which will outline specific terms and conditions. Normally, loans will be in first position for recoupment of any sums disbursed.

Applications for promotion and distribution will be considered following November 1, 1987.

Non-theatrical Film Assistance

Film B.C. will assist film projects not normally destined for theatre distribution or television exhibition and which may utilize any of the following formats: 16mm, video, videodiscs, film strips with audiocassettes, slides with audiocassette, or in some cases including related computer software.

Eligible Projects

Factors which will be considered for any non-theatrical project will include:

- content, size of budget, demonstrated user interest, distributor participation, level of other funding, export potential, and size of commercial market.
- a requirement of an advan-

ce or guarantee from a Canadian non-theatrical distributor or pre-sale to user.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants should be independent producers, who are Canadian Residents (a landed immigrant or Canadian citizen), who have been resident in British Columbia for at least 12 months, and whose company, organization, partnership or co-operative must be based in British Columbia.

Fully sponsored films are not eligible, nor are applications from public film agencies (i.e. NFB). However, projects may be co-produced with such an agency as long as originating producer retains control.

Projects in this category will be juried on a quarterly basis.

Applicants must have demonstrated relevant experience and have had a minimum of at least one work produced for film, television or a related medium.

Financial participation

Film B.C. will normally participate in financing by way of equity investment, although it may choose to proceed by way of loan. Approved projects will be eligible for up to \$10,000 to

a maximum of 25 per cent of total production expense.

Applications for non-theatrical film assistance will be considered following November 1, 1987.

Professional Internship

Film B.C. will assist with the professional development and upgrading of individuals currently employed in the industry or in an affiliated discipline, and who have shown a high degree of commitment and interest in achieving greater skills, or who may wish to move from the creative to production and management side of the industry.

Applicants must be Canadian Residents (a landed immigrant or Canadian citizen), who have been resident in British Columbia for at least 12 months.

To assist successful applicants, Film B.C. will provide direct grants to qualified individuals representing up to 50 per cent of salary up to \$300 per week to a maximum of 20 weeks per applicant. The matching of Film B.C.'s commitment by an industry partner is required.

Applications for professional internship will be considered following November 1, 1987.

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