



11th Annual Teddies Waste Award Nominees

*Honouring the best of the worst of government spending
and taxes.*

Federal Nominees:

Canada Council for the Arts: The Curious Case of the Poop Machine and the Flying Banana

Nominated for: "Best Achievement in Special Effects with Taxpayer Dollars"

Set during the current economic slowdown in Canada, the film depicts the Canadian Council for the Arts' curious decision to fund science fiction-like projects despite calls for fiscal responsibility. The film chronicles the council's decision to bankroll the cost of bringing a "poop machine" exhibit to a Quebec University and the creation of a giant inflatable banana.

Known as the "Geostationary Banana Project," the artist behind the initiative sought to create a giant inflatable banana and fly it over the state of Texas. The project received \$40,000 in funding from the Council in 2007-08 and a further \$40,000 in 2008-09. While sceptics will note the project is still hundreds of thousands of dollars away from getting off the ground. There was some good news for taxpayers: the artist will have to report to the council what he learned from his attempts.

Conversely, the poop machine was a safe bet for the council as it was already produced by a Belgian artist. All the council had to do was pay \$15,000 to help bring the project to Canada. Thankfully, the Department of Canadian Heritage's Fund for travelling artists was able to fulfill a supporting role by matching the \$15,000 donation.

Lori Ridgeway: She's Just Not Into Frugality

Nominated for: "Best Foreign Actress in a Leading Role"

Fisheries and Oceans bureaucrat, Lori Ridgeway, qualified for the foreign actress category after it was learned that she billed Canadian taxpayers for more than 50 international trips from March 2005 to March 2008.

Canadian Taxpayers Federation 2009 Teddy Awards

In total, taxpayers footed the bill for over \$400,000 worth of travel expenses, including accommodation bills from a five-star resort in Australia, a posh resort in Thailand and even the luxurious Shangri-La hotels in Singapore and Bangkok.

One critic noted the prestigious foreign nomination would not have been possible, had Ridgeway decided to “send regrets” or participated by conference call more often. A sequel, “Where in the World is Lori Ridgeway?” is already in the works, but may be shelved after Miss Ridgeway’s testimony at an upcoming House of Commons committee hearing. Hopefully, MPs haven’t called the meeting to pick-up travel tips.

CBC Brass: Slumdog Executives

Nominated for: “Most Out of Touch”

A heart-wrenching tale, “Slumdog Executives” is the story of a federal Crown corporation that was able to scrape together enough funds to provide its senior brass with luxurious perks. The dazzling film documents the travels of its board members and top executives as they rose above economy class on flights across the world.

One of the most dramatic scenes occurred when Edna Turpin, a CBC board member received the “ok” for expensing an executive class ticket from St. John’s to Toronto at a cost of \$3,065. Fiscal watchdogs had threatened to derail her plans noting that an economy class ticket cost less than a third of the ticket she purchased. Some watchdogs even had the audacity to question other bills allowed by the broadcaster such as an \$800 bill for a European hotel room which included a butler.

The film comes to a climax when it was revealed that the CBC’s Vice-President of French Services expensed almost \$80,000 in travel, theatre tickets and meals in 2006 alone. Timothy Casgrain, the Chair of the CBC’s board of directors, came to the defence of the VP, noting - “The people who work at this corporation are mindful of the need to manage public resources responsibly in order to maximize the effectiveness of the services Canadians expect us to provide”

Mr. Casgrain must have been referring to the beat reporters and cameramen because he clearly wasn’t talking about the CBC Brass.

Parks Canada: No Bladder Relief for Old Men

Nominated for: “Most Anticipated Film Prop”

Set in the beautiful Lake Minnewanka area of Alberta, “No Bladder Relief for Old Men” is a documentary on Parks Canada’s decision to build a \$1.8-million solar-powered toilet.

The film chronicles the adventures of thousands of park visitors who simply wanted to use a toilet, but are left to find refuge behind trees as the government’s sophisticated bowls have yet to achieve functionality. Two years after the project received the green light, cross-legged visitors began questioning what happened to regular toilets – the kind that cost less and are up and running in days.

“For \$1.8-million, couldn’t they have rented porta-potties or built standard toilets?” questioned an avid camper who had been holding it for two years.

Provincial Nominees:

Manitoba Family Services Agency: I Know What You Did Last May

Nominated for: "Best Make-Up"

The opening scene features employees of the All Nations Coordinated Response Network (a Manitoba government family services agency) huddled around a tarot card reader at a staff "workshop." Despite the best efforts of the tarot reader, the cards didn't show that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation would catch the agency red handed...err red nail polished.

The CTF learned that the agency's "workshop" (known as "spa day" by staff) not only featured tarot readings, but also included manicures, pedicures and make-up lessons for employees courtesy of the taxpayer...or so it seemed. After the CTF raised the matter with the provincial government, the agency was told it would have to fundraise \$2,292 in order to repay bills not in the film's budget.

Family Services Minister Gord Mackintosh did commit to shelving a sequel.

Alberta MLA Pay Hike: Catch Us If You Can't

Nominated for: "Best Ensemble Cast"

"Catch Us If You Can't" begins with a smoke-filled room and politicians of all stripe slapping each other on the backs. Howls and high fives were a dime a dozen as the usually divisive crowd speculated as to what they would purchase with the raises they had just voted each other. Who could blame them? After all, they had just voted to give themselves raises by increasing the pay they receive for sitting on various committees. Further, cabinet ministers received a \$42,000 pay hike, while the Premier's salary jumped by \$54,000. The speaker and leader of the opposition also received significant increases. Everyone was a winner that day except the taxpayer.

Politicians did everything they could to sneak through the pay hike with no one noticing. Thankfully, the spending watchdog, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, caught them red-handed and exposed the pay hike.

Saskatchewan Government: Butterfly Effect II

Nominated for: "Best Remake of an Original"

A comedy movie that is based on a true story, "Butterfly Effect II" features Saskatchewan bureaucrats in a bizarre challenge to waste as many tax dollars as possible without getting caught.

The bureaucrats came up with the almost perfect plan of blowing millions through the conversion of a nursing college into office space and then converting it once more... back to a nursing college. The plan seemed brilliant as the renovations were to take place over a five year period. After all, who really pays attention to all those government announcements and renovations? What the tricksters soon found out was that taxpayers in Regina actually remember such projects from year to year.

One of the film's most amusing scenes came when the office space was being converted

back to a college. This required digging out a lecture hall as it had been filled with sand and levelled off to create the office space. Construction workers were cast as archaeologists as they delicately uncovered old desks and remains from the not-so-ancient lecture hall.

At \$5-million for the initial conversion and \$11-million for the second, the bill to taxpayers came to a mind-blowing \$16-million.

New Brunswick Government Lodge: The Dark Over-Night

Nominated for: "Most Supportive Government Role for the Privileged"

"The Dark Over-Night" is a dark drama where a joker teams up with politicians against taxpayers in New Brunswick. Staged at a New Brunswick government-owned resort and fishing lodge. The film features an eclectic group of participants visiting the lodge at taxpayer expense.

Filmed at Larry's Gulch fishing resort from July 9-11, 2008, the lodge-guests included New Brunswick Premier Shawn Graham, and energy minister Jack Keir. The role of joker is played by Saturday Night Live executive producer Lorne Michaels. They are joined by American artist John Alexander, U.S. undersecretary of energy Bud Albright and Chris Huskilson, the head of Emera Inc. Without seeing the film, one can only imagine which lodge-guest is the first to get it.

The government's lodge is set on the beautiful Restigouche River and is known as "Larry's Gulch Lodge." It was purchased by the New Brunswick government in 1974 for \$22,000. The lodge's current assessed value is approximately \$1.2-million and is subsidized by taxpayers to the tune of \$200,000 each year.

Municipal:

City of Vancouver: See No Risk, Hear No Risk

Nominated for: "Riskiest Support for a Boondoggle"

A fast-paced business drama which chronicles the actions of Vancouver's inept City government, "See No Risk, Hear No Risk" is based on the true story of costs for the 2010 Olympic athletes' village.

The story starts with the clinking of glasses as councillors complete a 'risk-free' deal which would raise \$193-million for city coffers in return for allowing a firm to build an athletes village on city land.

However, the celebration would prove to be premature as things quickly spiralled out of control after the construction firm's deal with its financier fell through. The city then kicked it into high gear and found itself "luge'ing" down the slippery subsidy slope.

Council initially jumped in to loan \$100-million to the project, but eventually found itself holding the bag for \$875-million in debt, and as the owner of hundreds of condos.

The film includes graphic arguments between council members and angry taxpayers who questioned the city's poor judgement.

City of Edmonton: Calculator 2: Judgement Day

Nominated for: "Best Example of Duplicitous Waste"

Set in 2008, "Calculator 2: Judgement Day" takes place eleven years after John Connor, leader of the resistance, fought off a terminator from the future. In the sequel, Connor confronts an onslaught of online carbon footprint calculators that threatened to monopolize the information super highway.

The calculators, which allow users to measure the amount of carbon dioxide released from one's actions, began populating at a torrid pace a year earlier. In fact, David Suzuki's web site alone included links to over two dozen on-line free carbon footprint calculators already in existence.

Calculator 2 begins with Connor making a presentation at a City of Edmonton council meeting in an attempt to halt city plans to use taxpayer dollars to bombard the internet with yet another carbon calculator.

His inability to sway council resulted in a \$40,000 expenditure by the City of Edmonton to build the redundant online device.

After watching the two hour epic, one viewer commented, "If you've seen one calculator, you've seen them all. This sequel stinks."

City of Toronto: Toiletformers

Nominated for: "Most Flushing"

Inspired by the movie "Transformers," "Toiletformers" is a documentary that follows the City of Toronto's decision to transform the restroom facilities at the Canadian National Exhibition's Automotive Building.

At a price tag of \$935,000, the conversion switched the facility's water dependence from lake water to rainwater. The catch however, became apparent as the facility would still rely on lake water from time to time as Toronto's annual rainfall couldn't support the new system. Even more intriguing is the fact that the CNE's ground sprinklers still use water from the lake.

Despite the lavish toilet's system's huge price tag, it did fall significantly short of the supposed world record, a pure gold toilet in Hong Kong that cost a reported \$50-million (CDN). After hearing the Hong Kong toilet, one Toronto city politician quipped "don't count us out yet."

City of Winnipeg: Titanic 2

Nominated for: "Best Ending"

There were no icebergs or cries of "I'm the king of the world" in this dramatic film out of Winnipeg, Manitoba, but the movie wasn't short on drama. "Titanic 2" features the gradual decline of a City of Winnipeg boat tour service that previously ran up and down the Red River.

The service lost \$43,688 over the last six years, including \$8,754 in 2008 alone. The gradual decline of the operation was exacerbated by private competitors that attracted customers away from the ill-run government enterprise. Compounding the demise of the boat service were citizens who called for the government to focus on core services like fixing the city's streets and making them safe.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation delivered the death blow to the enterprise after it convinced Mayor Sam Katz to rub out the operation.

After watching the film, one viewer added “What is this a practical joke? The City used to run a boat tour?”

City of Oshawa: Honey, They Bought the Shrunken Village

Nominated for: “Most Miniature”

Attention X-Files fans, “Honey, They Bought the Shrunken Village,” is the new mystery king in town. The story takes place in the City of Oshawa and follows city council’s bizarre decision to spend \$234,000 on a collection of miniature characters and buildings from a garden in Whitby, the town next door. To further cause head scratching, only three months later council learned that maintaining the mini-village would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and decided to try to sell the collection. Not surprisingly, no one bought the goods.

This obviously led to all kinds of scuttlebutt as to how council could make such strange decisions. “There is something in the water fountains at city hall” was just one theory yelled out by an angry resident in a pitchfork-wielding mob scene in the town’s square.

Oddly enough, the film draws to a close with the simplest conclusion prevailing – sadly enough, it’s just plain easier to spend someone else’s money.

Lifetime Achievement:

Big 3 Auto: The Comeback Kids

Nominated for: “Best Sequel to a Sequel’s Sequel”

A political thriller, “The Comeback Kids” depicts the timeless tripartite battle between North America’s big three automakers, cowardly politicians and angry taxpayers.

Throughout the film, the automakers are compared with crack addicts; addicted to routine handouts and ever-promising that each subsidy would be their last. Just like in real life, the addicts needed cash to feed their problem. That’s where the politicians came in. Always ready to give the addicts what they wanted, the politicians bore a striking resemblance to your local meth dealer.

Most heart-warming about the film is its portrayal of the victim, in this case the taxpayer. Just like the parent of a troubled junkie, it’s the taxpayer that’s routinely left to clean up the mess after each injection.

Despite assurances that each handout would be the last, the sad reality was the auto kids just kept coming back for more. From 2003 to 2008, big auto had received over \$780-million in government handouts and loans. Not surprisingly, the firms still managed to shed thousands of jobs over the same period. Just like feeding a crack addict drugs, the government handouts actually seemed to make the situation worse.

“I actually shed a tear while watching the film,” said one taxpayer after watching the film with his son Roy. “It was a pretty special moment to be able to watch the film with my boy. After all, I grew up hearing my dad get upset about the regular handouts. Now my son can do the same.”