



# 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Teddies Waste Award Nominees

## Federal Nominees:

### **Jean Pierre Blackburn: Politicians, Staffers and a Snake on a Plane**

*Nominated for "Best Use of Non-Transparent Props in a Performance"*

Taxpayers thought they had seen the last of films about ministerial waste and lack of transparency now that new directors were running Ottawa's federal studio, but not so in the case of Conservative Labour Minister and Quebec MP Jean-Pierre Blackburn.

The film begins with Minister Blackburn brushing off suggestions of overspending on travel as he brags that he spent less than his Liberal predecessor. This is true – only if you don't include \$150,000 for 25 charter flights including one that cost a whopping \$41,822.

Of the 25 flights, only 8 were posted as ministerial travel. The rest are listed as department contracts with zero information about who flew or where they went.

Later scenes clear up the mystery. As the minister for regional development in Quebec, Minister Blackburn is handing out political pork with reckless abandon with nearly 20 per cent of all handouts to Quebec benefiting his local region – even though only 4 per cent of Quebec's population lives there.

Throughout the film, Minister Blackburn is unrepentant. When questioned about his excessive travel he responds saying he can't do his job "by bicycle." He probably could, but with all the loot he's been doling out, he would need a very large basket on the front.

### **Senator Raymond Lavigne: The Wakefield Chainsaw Massacre**

*Nominated for "Achievement in Use of Extras"*

Opening scenes of this film are set in Wakefield, Quebec, complete with the unmistakable racket of a chainsaw. A local man, Neil Faulkner, is horrified to discover a stranger cutting down trees on his property. Who is this chainsaw-yielding man? It turns out to be the executive assistant to Mr. Faulkner's neighbour, Liberal Senator Raymond Lavigne. Mr. Faulkner sues the senator and files a complaint with the Senate.

A special Senate committee discovers misuse of Senate resources including \$24,000 in travel between Ottawa and Montreal and staff doubling as landscapers on the public

## Canadian Taxpayers Federation 2008 Teddy Awards

dime. He is ordered to repay the funds and is kicked out of the Liberal caucus.

As with all good thrillers, the RCMP is called in and Senator Lavigne is charged with fraud over \$5,000, breach of trust, and obstruction of justice. Taxpayers, Senate reform advocates and environmentalists demand a refund and give the film two thumbs down.

### **Canada Revenue Agency: In the Valley of EI**

*Nominated for "Tax-collector Bullying"*

This is the story of a big-game hunter who decides to alter course and follow fresh rabbit tracks.

Early scenes in this action film show the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) pursuing hundreds of fruit and vegetable pickers in British Columbia – many of whom are elderly and illiterate – and accusing them of exaggerating the number of hours they worked in order to qualify for Employment Insurance benefits.

"Not on my watch," cry CRA officials as they relentlessly chase the accused farm labourers all the way into tax court where they spend ten years and 6-million tax dollars trying to recoup approximately \$500,000 in alleged EI overpayments. Millions more are scheduled to be spent as filming begins in another similar case involving another 120 labourers.

### **Canadian International Development Agency: No Country For Old Pork**

*Nominated for "Worst Foreign Handout"*

Expectations were running high when the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) announced a new film detailing how it would hand out part of its \$3-billion in annual funding to "support sustainable development in developing countries in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world."

But what sounded like the feel-good film of the year quickly became anything but. Early scenes reveal Canada's "development assistance" contributed \$7.7-million in "aid" to Ireland – the fourth-richest country in the world – and one with much lower taxes than in Canada. Talk about the luck of the Irish!

In later scenes, CIDA gives \$57-million to China – a country with 10% annual economic growth, nuclear weapons and a space program! Moviegoers are shocked as all along they expected aid money to go to more noble projects such as water and infrastructure projects in Africa.

## **Provincial Nominees:**

### **Murray Smith: Mr. Smith Goes to Washington**

*Nominated for "Most Expensive Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role"*

When the province of Alberta gets behind a production they spare no expense. The film involves the province's office in Washington, D.C; and its lead actor – former cabinet minister Murray Smith – didn't come cheap.

## Canadian Taxpayers Federation 2008 Teddy Awards

Mr. Smith with his modest \$233,000 salary oversees vitally important services to Alberta citizens such as throwing a \$3.8-million Canada Day bash along with other such social gatherings.

Upon growing tired of billing taxpayers for taxis to the tune of \$6,250, Smith convinces the Alberta government to lease him a car for \$518 a month and another \$2,122.34 when the vehicle of Mr. Smith's choice has to be shipped in.

In 2006, taxpayers paid \$6,216 for the car lease and another \$320 a month for two parking spaces. Movie-goers begin to choke on their popcorn when in the next scene a bill arrives for \$6,000 in gas and – wait for it – more taxi charges! Other expenses include:

- \$15,000 yearly allowance;
- \$528 a month in health insurance;
- \$400 a month to store Smith's personal belongings;
- \$350 monthly charge for management fees in relation to his home in Calgary;
- \$6,500 monthly rent for his apartment in Washington.

And oh...\$895 for a GPS device to find his way around Washington. Movie goers hope the new star of the upcoming sequel will figure out that maps can be purchased for under \$10.

### **Quebec Lieutenant Governor Lise Thibault: It's a Good Life**

*Nominated for "Achievement in Tax Dollar Mis-direction"*

This truly is a taxpayer horror film. And when the plot involves the Quebec auditor general, the auditor general of Canada and the RCMP and Quebec police, you know it's sure to be a smash hit.

In her ten-year reign of taxpayer terror, former Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec Lise Thibault's lavish spending would make even an Arab Sheik blush. Scene after scene has taxpayers spilling their drinks. Here is how she spent some of the \$1.7 million given to her from Heritage Canada:

- \$825 for a suite at the Ritz-Carleton in Montreal;
- \$59,000 for a garden party;
- \$4,000 for a family member's birthday party;
- \$2,800 for two meals in Quebec City;
- \$45,000 in reimbursements for gifts with no list of recipients provided;
- \$2,400 for a 5-night stay at the Mont-Tremblant ski resort; and
- \$12,000 for taking a Quebec government plane on a fishing trip and a tour of a provincial park.

The mystery deepens as all three provincial parties in Quebec demand answers. Neither the auditors general of Canada nor Quebec can figure out how over 40% or \$700,000 of spending relates to her official duties. Like all villains, she denies all wrongdoing right to the end. Wallets across the nation can now rest easy as, thankfully, her reign of taxpayer terror is over.

### **New Brunswick Shawn Graham: Eastern (Canadian) Promises**

*Nominated for "Most Bizarre Plot Line in a Screenplay"*

This movie stars then-New Brunswick Liberal leader Shawn Graham who campaigns to attract business and investment to his province. Fair enough. He also wants to stop people from leaving for greener pastures elsewhere in the federation. So what does he do as soon as he gets elected?

In his government's first budget, he raises business and personal income taxes – the first personal income tax increase in over a decade! One movie-goer was overheard saying "I had my bags packed for Alberta until I heard about the tax hike!" A businessman at the premiere similarly said, "I was going to expand in Halifax but if I stay in Moncton I can give more money to the government!"

In a true plot spoiler, the government posts a surplus meaning they didn't need to raise taxes in the first place. We'll have to wait for a sequel to see if new businesses and more people are flocking to New Brunswick theatres for more of Premier Graham's strategies to grow his province.

### **Government of Ontario: There Will Be Cash**

*Nominated for "Most Shameless Example of Rewarding Your Friends"*

In a big screen feature that later become known as 'Slushgate,' Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty once again leaves all in the theatre wondering why they trust him with their tax dollars. In this latest installment, organizations friendly to Ontario's Liberal studio were handed \$32-million in grants in end-of-year spending. Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter gave two thumbs down in a special report.

Audiences and critics alike agree that the funniest part of the film comes in what is known as the "Cricket scene." In this frame, the Ontario Cricket Association asks for \$150,000 yet they are given \$1-million! The silver lining only comes at the film's end when a cabinet minister takes the fall and resigns in shame. Nonetheless, McGuinty and his gang are re-elected to a second term setting the stage for a sequel.

## **Municipal Nominees:**

### **Christine Nunziata: Entitled to my Entitlements the Sequel**

*Nominated for "Accomplishment in Comedic Use of an Expense Account"*

Not since David Dingwall's "I'm Entitled to my Entitlements" have movie-goers left theatres so stunned.

Former Toronto Catholic School Board Trustee Christine Nunziata brought wasteful spending to the screen in ways it may take years for film studios to match. As first reported in the Toronto Sun her numerous abuses of public money include:

- \$816 vacation to Cuba;
- \$3,000 trip to the Dominican Republic allegedly on business although a staff review found she "attended no meetings but did get married and had a honeymoon;"

## Canadian Taxpayers Federation 2008 Teddy Awards

- \$575 purchase at Tiffany & Co;
- \$186 for an online purchase from a U.S. based lingerie store;
- \$834 for a camera;
- \$502 for a trip to Canada's Wonderland;
- A September 2007 cell phone bill of \$884, including \$628 in long distance charges to and from the Turks and Caicos Islands;
- \$12,000 for food and liquor with most bills on weekends late at night ;
- \$100 gift card from Wal-Mart; and
- Coffee from Tim Horton's.

"Heard enough?" says a voice on the loudspeaker to all in the theatre. Hope comes in closing scenes when it is revealed Ms. Nunziata is ordered to pay back what has been deemed "personal." Moviegoers do feel ripped off but are comforted by the fact that a second installment appears unlikely as school trustee corporate credit cards have gone the way of the Dodo bird and expenses will be posted online in the future.

There is further audience satisfaction in the end as Nunziata ends up being booted from the board – not for wasteful spending – but for missing too many meetings.

### **Jan Harder: "Brand Transformers"**

*Nominated for "Talent in Talking Out of Both Sides of One's Mouth"*

Every so often a film star appears on the scene with undeniable talent. There is no role that he or she cannot nail. One such actor is Ottawa City Councillor Jan Harder. The movie begins when Councillor Harder runs for re-election loudly proclaiming to be a "tax fighter." In fact, an entire section of her re-election website brags about her tax fighting credentials, in large bold lettering to boot.

After the election, however, she really confuses movie-goers when she leads the charge on the largest tax increase in the history of the amalgamated City of Ottawa. She later shows how great her acting talent is when she denies ever having campaigned as a tax fighter in comments to the local media, yet leaves the "tax fighting" section of her website fully intact.

In closing scenes, Councillor Harder is confirmed as another tax and spend politician who says one thing and does another. Reports of note taking chameleons in the theatre have not been confirmed.

### **City of Toronto: The Spending Ultimatum**

*Nominated for "Worst Use of an Auditor General and Integrity Commissioner in a Comedic Film"*

Taxpayers flock to the theatres when two city of Toronto councillors, Rob Ford and Doug Holyday, make a film. Renowned for being penny-pinchers, the stars are audited by the city's Integrity Commissioner and Auditor General over the lack of use of their \$53,000 office budget expense accounts.

When it came to light that Ford spent \$0 and Holyday only spent \$1500 out of their respective budgets, big spending Toronto Councillor Georgio Mammoliti, in his bid for the top actor nod, rallied council to vote for an investigation into the practice of spending so

little. Ford and Holyday have been perennial thorns in the side of big spending members of Toronto city council and their action movies always show them fighting to reduce spending and stop waste.

In final scenes, Ford is slapped on the wrist for refusing to disclose his personal expenses even though he doesn't want to get paid back for them and refuses to make taxpayers foot the bill. The Integrity Commissioner, the Auditor General, their staff and council spent untold hours filming the fighting and mud-slinging over the audit of budget under-spending when they could have been investigating how to reduce spending and reduce taxes. Go figure! Only in Toronto!

### **Lifetime Achievement Teddy:**

#### **Canada's Tax Code**

In 1917 during World War I, then-Finance Minister Sir William Thomas White brought forth the "War Tax Upon Income" bill saying it was a temporary measure. He insisted it be called this because he hoped it would not last much longer than the war itself. He said:

"We do not know how long this war will last...(But)...A year or two after the war is over, the measure should be reviewed by the minister of finance of the day."

Here it is 91 years later and the tax remains. This must be what the great economist Milton Friedman meant when he said "Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program."

How has Canada's tax code changed in those nine decades? In 1917, the bill introducing a war tax was 11 pages long and levied a 4% tax on all income of single men over \$2,000. For others, the personal exemption was \$3,000. For Canadians with annual incomes of more than \$6,000, the tax rate ranged from 2 to 25 per cent.

Today, it has grown to four tax brackets of 15, 22, 26, and 29 per cent. But the real complications come with the myriad of credits, exemptions, and deductions and payments that make the average's taxpayer's head spin yet leave the average accountant grinning from ear to ear.

This complexity has expanded the tax code from its original 11-pages to a mind-numbing 2,226 page document today that only experts understand.

Not surprisingly, Canada now has an army of tax collectors. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is the second largest government body next to National Defence. Moreover, this army isn't shy about touting its might. It's general – Commissioner and CEO of the CRA William Baker – recently boasted that his troops number 46,000, including 10,000 financial "experts" and have an annual budget of \$4-billion.

For this year's lifetime achievement Teddy, the Academy of Taxers and Spenders recognizes Canada's tax code for its ability to grow and spawn into a giant mess of complex bureaucratise.

Some advice from the CTF? Simplify things. This will reduce the tax burden on beleaguered Canadians and help ordinary people better understand the system Heck, it will also save some trees which may even get David Suzuki on board.