

LETTER TO BC TOURISM AND THE GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

While the B.C. government is making a substantial effort to increase tourism in British Columbia through the Times of India Film Awards, there is also another way to drastically increase tourism in British Columbia by supporting both the B.C. and Indian film industries.

“B.C. residents are most supportive of encouraging strong growth in the tourism industry, but support for the film industry follows close behind [with 85% in support of growing the industry].”

- MPPIA Report on B.C. Film Industry, January 2013

Sudhanshu Hukku, founder of the Locations Annual Exhibition Conference in Mumbai stands by his research that Indian films shot in foreign locations have a huge impact on the influx of Indian tourists. Countries that have seen substantial increases of Indian tourists include South Africa (50 films in last 10 years), Mauritius (250 films in last 20 years), and Thailand (with more than 1500 films in last 20 years).

An impressive example is with “Kaho Na Pyaar Hai” shot in New Zealand, which increased New Zealand’s inbound tourism of India five-fold after its release in 2001.

Impressed by the effects of these Indian films, some Tourism Boards and Film Commissions have jointly and independently ventured ahead to ensure their country’s regions as product placement in Indian films giving substantial aids beyond prescribed subsidies and tax waivers in return for additional publicity for the region.

Krishh Singapore Tourism Invested 2.5 Million USD in Hrithek Roshan's Film in 2005, to see another turn around in Singapore’s tourism

Don A ShahRukh Khan film which Malaysia Tourism invested 1 Million USD 2007

Ek Thaa Tiger A Salman Khan blockbuster of a film produced by Yash Raj Films. Almost 30% of the production costs were shared by Tourism Ireland and The Irish Film Commission 2012

On March 1st, 2013 the B.C. – India Film and Media Initiative held a roundtable to discuss and identify key areas for potential collaboration and come up with solutions to help strengthen the relationship. It was attended by 17 industry professionals and government representatives who all agreed that B.C. and India had many areas where both industries could benefit from each other that were not limited to B.C. becoming a backdrop for Indian films. Key areas for collaboration included Animation and Gaming, Film and Media education exchanges, and Coproduction opportunities with a wealth of Indo-Canadian stories to be shared with the world.

In order to start some of these collaborations, the roundtable mutually concluded that B.C. needed to promote itself not only as a good location to film, but a film friendly region with billion-dollar infrastructure and a great labor force. Awareness of the talent, expertise, and stories available in the B.C. film industry would naturally become apparent as more India productions come and produce in B.C.

“Mukta Arts would be *keen on doing a film set in Canada/B.C.* This film could be done to highlight the locales and every major locations set in Canada/B.C. [but would] purely depend on what kind of support [B.C.] can offer us in shooting this film. If we can get details and if it excites us then we can work out the story and this movie could become your tourism show reel too.

- Rajesh Nair, COO of Mukta Arts Film Productions

The Indian film industry produces more films per year than the USA, China, and Japan combined, with 20% of the combined budgets spent on foreign shores. The Indian Television industry is also growing even more rapidly than film with 15.5% just last year and the audience is also growing

internationally. JD Majethia, head of the Association of Motion Pictures & T.V. Program Producers (AMPTPP) suggested that B.C. tourism also create relationships with Indian television channels to produce a series of television episodes in British Columbia to *increase the visibility of B.C. as a destination* and service industry.

The time to implement these deals and incentives is now, as the Times of India Film Awards (TOIFA) approaches on April 6th with half of the Indian film industry in Vancouver drawing eyes around the world to be British Columbia. There is also FICCI Frames in Mumbai on March 11-13th and the B.C. – India Global Business forum that same week. A demand to increase tax incentives for foreign productions is also *supported by the B.C. film industry* itself since the province's tax credits are no longer competing with the rest of the country, creating a loss of 25,000 jobs.

A few suggestions for activities during the next month to increase collaboration between the film industries would be to take delegates of Indian directors, producers, and stars attending TOIFA on a tour of the B.C. film industry to showcase the locations, facilities, and expertise. Further delegations for more independent producers could also be a great follow-up activity post-TOIFA based on a similar model by the OMD, whose delegations to India have resulted in signed production contracts.

The FICCI Frames film market and B.C. – India Global Business Forum would also be an ideal platform to announce plans to *increase basic tax incentives from being on labor only, to an across the board tax break* similar to Ontario's 25% tax break on total production spend in the province. Not only would this settle local industry demands, but it would also create an awareness of B.C. as a potential filming location before TOIFA and capitalize on the visibility of the Awards and tourism promotion.

There is serious interest and huge potential for collaboration between the Indian and BC film industries. A wealth of untold stories and untapped markets lies waiting for increased tax incentives that will nurture and grow both the B.C. tourism and film industry and create closer ties between India and British Columbia. We ask you to please take the suggestions of the B.C. – India Film and Media Initiative into consideration and help open doors for both countries.

Thank you for considering our suggestions.
Kind regards,

The B.C. – India Film and Media Initiative

Contact:
Paula McGlynn
mcglynnpaula@hotmail.com
604-209-8117
paulamcglynn.wordpress.com