

**Date:** 2021-01-11

**Subject:** **Film Services Feasibility Report & Film Office Update**

**Contact:** Jason Tamming, Director Strategic Communications, Culture & Events  
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**Report Number:** Corporate Support Services-2021-119

**Recommendations:**

1. That the report from Jason Tamming, Director Strategic Communications, Culture and Events, dated January 11, 2021 to the Committee of Council meeting of February 3, 2021 titled Film Services Feasibility Study & Film and Television Office Update be received; and
2. That the Film Services Feasibility Study be endorsed by Council and staff given approval to move forward with recommendations.

**Overview:**

- The City of Brampton Film and Television Office has been operational for approximately seven years and is currently a unit within the Tourism Department.
- Year-over-year statistics illustrate the continuing upward trend in film production companies selecting Brampton as a location and support formalizing processes, guidelines and by-laws for efficiency and for leveraging film as an economic driver.
- SKH Consulting was contracted in Q4 2019 to assess film opportunities for Brampton going forward and the goal of becoming a “film friendly city.”
- The study identifies a number of recommendations for the Film and Television Office the majority of which will be implemented pending endorsement of the study by Council.
- The pandemic had significant impacts on filming in Ontario for the period from March to September 2020. All productions have been operating since September in accordance with guidelines from the Section 21 Film and Television Health and Safety Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

## **Background:**

The City of Brampton's Film and Television Office has experienced increased year-over-year activity and for the last four years. Filming in 2019, the last full year of operation prior to COVID-19, attracted approximately \$3,000,000 in production spending, saw over 100 shoot days and generated just over \$300,000 in revenue for the City of Brampton. At present, there are two fairly new studio spaces in Brampton.

Recognition of increased film activity led to the determination that a more strategic and focused approach to growth in this sector was required. To achieve this objective, SKH Consulting was engaged to carry out a feasibility study with Sarah Ker-Hornell, an industry expert with extensive experience in the Canadian film industry including 12 years as CEO & Executive Director of screen-based industry consortium *FilmOntario*, as lead on the project.

SKH Consulting conducted interviews with over 30 internal and external stakeholders – the full list is included in the attached report. City reports and documents were also reviewed as part of the analysis of the film sector in Brampton. The Film Services Feasibility Survey was administered in Q1 2020.

The Feasibility Study recommends that the following policy items be implemented as a package.

- The establishment of the film and television industry as a lead economic development file for the City of Brampton.
- Council direction to all departments, agencies, boards and commissions to review relevant policies, procedures and activities with the expectation of adding/including film activity service or support in their scope of work.
- The provisions of by-laws, such as zoning, be interpreted to include filming at locations within the City of Brampton.
- The establishment of a Brampton Film and Television Industry Advisory Board. A departmental-led advisory board will initially be established to focus on film processes and best practices with membership comprised of industry leads including producers, film union representatives, studio owners, industry support service representatives and key internal and external stakeholders. The function and membership of the board will be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure industry needs and issues are being appropriately met.
- The protection of Employment Lands zoning to attract infrastructure activity and development.
- Undertake a review of the redirection of industry municipal building and parking rental fees to the Film and Television Office to offset overhead and operations.
- The establishment of the Brampton Film and Television Office to be located on the first floor of City Hall. Since receipt of this strategy, the office has been moved to the first floor of City Hall for increased visibility and improved customer service.

Recommendation details are available in full in the report attached.

As noted, filming in Brampton is experiencing an annual upward trend. In addition to volume, filming now requires the implementation of pandemic safety measures as prescribed by the Ontario Ministry of Labour that result in a more complex and staff intensive scenario. If film trends continue, additional resources will be sought in the 2022 budget process to support.

## **Current Situation:**

Soon after receipt of the Film Services Feasibility Study, filming in Brampton was halted because of COVID-19 in March of 2020 and come September, the remainder of 2020, the film and TV production industry showed signs of persistence and recovery due to the continued efforts by all film and TV production workers and stakeholders to maintain healthy and safe working environments that followed health and safety protocols set out by the Section 21 Film and Television Health and Safety Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development first issued in July.

The City of Brampton Film and Television Office continues to be very busy working with production representatives and the Ontario Film Commission to identify locations based on production inquiries from commercials, television series and feature films. Weekly calls with the Film Commissioner of Ontario aid in keeping staff abreast of opportunities as well as best practices during the pandemic. It is interesting to note that many productions planned for American cities have moved to Ontario because of the high COVID levels in the USA and the flexible but strong guidelines in Ontario.

In 2020, large tent-pole productions took notice of Brampton locations, which attracted approximately \$2,900,000 in production spending (nearly the same figure as all of 2019) over 85 filming days and 290 permitted days (which include prep, hold and wrap days – more than 2019 due to increased COVID-19 protocols), generating approximately \$58,000 in revenue for the City of Brampton.

Production activity also provided much-needed economic support for many Brampton filming locations including the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) who hosted productions including Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale", Apple's "See" (starring Jason Momoa) and others for over 160 days at Heart Lake Conservation Park and Claireville Conservation Area. The CAA Centre hosted CBC's "Battle of the Blades" figure skating competition show for over 70 days and Metrolinx, TRCA and city facilities and roadways hosted the latest Kevin Hart feature film "The Man From Toronto" over 81 permitted days in 2020.

Current guidelines as prescribed by the Ministry of Labour are available at – <https://www.filmsafety.ca/revised-section-21-covid-19-guidelines-november-25-2020/>

The Film and Television Office is recognized within the Tourism Department and was relocated to the first floor of City Hall early in 2020. Work to implement the remaining recommendations of the Film Services Feasibility Study is slated to begin in Q1 2021, pending Council endorsement, and will support the resurgence of film production in Brampton as part of the City's economic recovery.

## **Corporate Implications:**

### Financial Implications:

There are no financials implications from this report. Future operating impacts as a result of the growth of the Film Services industry will come back to Council either as a separate report back or through future Budget submission. Financial recommendations regarding the redirection of

rental and parking revenue outlined in this report will be further reviewed by staff and internal departments using a post-COVID-19 framework.

### **Term of Council Priorities:**

This recommendation aligns with the Term of Council Priorities. Responsible program administration supports a Well Run City and providing support to the film sector contributes to furthering Brampton as a Mosaic.

### **Conclusion:**

Staff recommends the endorsement of the Film Services Feasibility Study and its implementation as a key step to further support the objective of Brampton being a film-friendly city. As noted in Financial Implications, further internal discussions regarding the redirection of revenue from rentals and parking will be scheduled post-pandemic.

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### **Attachments:**

- Film Services Feasibility Study
- Ontario Film Commission Health & Safety Update - January 14, 2021