



Subject: Film Industry Opportunities – Update and Next Steps

Report Number: EDM 24-036

Department: Economic Development Department

Submitted by: Cephas Panschow, Development Commissioner

Meeting Type: Council Meeting

Meeting Date: Monday, October 21, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT report EDM 24-036 titled “Film Industry Opportunities – Update and Next Steps” be received; and,
- B. THAT the Film Policy be approved in principle, subject to final 2025 Budget and Business Plan approval, as a three year pilot program commencing January 1, 2025 or thereafter and expiring December 31, 2027 with staff support being included in the 2025 Budget and Business Plans for consideration;
- C. That film application fees be waived for the duration of the pilot program with productions only required to offset any direct municipal staffing costs; and,
- D. That a bylaw authorizing the Film Policy be brought forward for Council’s consideration upon completion of public consultation and engagement.

BACKGROUND

Tillsonburg Town Council approved the following motion at their October 10, 2023 meeting:

THAT report titled “Film Industry Opportunities” be received as information; and,

THAT staff be directed to:

- i. improve the Town’s current process by enhancing the Ontario Creates registry with all municipal properties, parks, trails and cemeteries;*
- ii. create a permitting process and fees; and create a central point of contact for film enquiries in the Economic Development and Marketing department.*

Ontario's film and television production industry is a \$4.5 billion dollar industry. Over 80 municipal film offices have been set-up across the province to take advantage of the opportunities this industry presents. Filming activities often have far-reaching impacts on a destination, benefiting local businesses through additional revenue, enhancing film related tourism or raising the overall profile of a community as a film destination. The filming sector relies on various adjacent and sub-industries for their operations and success. These include local restaurants, catering, accommodations, trades (electricians, painters, carpenters, etc.) and location rentals. Specifically, film shoots can:

- Enhance funding for local historical sites and museums during the off season or when visitor numbers are down;
- Supplement local business revenues during cooler seasons as that is typically when movie shoots occur;
- Promote awareness of local attractions to a wider audience; and,
- Promoting the community, thereby enhancing marketing efforts and the Town's brand.

To date, the following actions have been completed:

- Researched approximately a dozen municipal websites throughout southwestern Ontario to view what others are doing in regards to promoting their areas as "film-friendly" communities. These include:
 - County of Brant
 - City of Brantford
 - City of Cambridge
 - County of Elgin
 - City of Hamilton
 - City of Kingston
 - City of London
 - County of Middlesex
 - County of Oxford and
 - City of Toronto.
- Attended a Film London event on January 25, 2024;
- Met with Ontario Creates on February 23, 2024 to discuss the potential of Tillsonburg becoming a film-friendly location;
- Preparation of a list of potential municipal and private sector sites to be considered for inclusion in the Ontario Creates location photo inventory (currently the only local attraction listed is the Annandale National Historic Site);

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- Occasional participation in bi-weekly municipal zoom meetings hosted by Ontario Creates to garner information on promoting the film industry locally;
- Reached out to a number of Film Industry stakeholders including location scouts, producers, actors and other municipalities to provide expertise/input on how to develop a film-friendly community;
- Sent additional municipal facilities/locations to Ontario Creates to be included in their list of filming locations;
- Prepared a draft business plan to guide this process;
- Reached out to film location scouts, Film London and other film production stakeholders regarding setting up a tour of potential locations for filming locations in Tillsonburg;
- Prepared an inventory of potential filming locations as well as developing highlights of the Town's previous film experience as support materials;
- Joined various stakeholder groups (Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance and Film London) in order to boost Tillsonburg's profile in the filming industry;
- Staff has drafted a film policy, application, and production checklist to assist with this initiative.

DISCUSSION

In order to advance Tillsonburg's interest in becoming a potential location for filming, the following actions are recommended to be implemented over the next three years.

2024

- 1) Host an open house to gauge interest from local stakeholders and property owners in becoming a film-friendly community and to confirm potential film locations by having property owners sign up (Q4-on-going);
- 2) Enhance internal and external marketing of this new service/program (Q4);
- 3) Review any financial considerations during 2025 Budget process;
- 4) Tour industry reps through Tillsonburg to potential film locations with goal of attracting potential shoots (Q3-Q4);

2025

- 1) Continue/strengthen participation with film stakeholders (Ontario Film Commission, Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance, Film London, etc.) (on-going);

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- 2) Secure small shoots (e.g. film school productions) to get word-of-mouth started and use productions for marketing purposes (Q3);
- 3) Work with industry stakeholders to encourage provincial government to enhance film credits for all productions (Q1-Q4);

2026

- 1) Examine whether Town has potential/is becoming a preferred film location choice for industry (Q1);
- 2) If yes, review/renew Film Policy and Fee schedule to ensure relevancy (Q1);
- 3) Consider extension of fee waiver policy in order to encourage attraction of larger film productions (Q1); and,
- 4) Update location inventory (Q2).

CONSULTATION

Discussions took place with Brant, Middlesex and Oxford counties as well as the City of London. The draft report, Film Policy and appendices were circulated to the Town's Managers group and the Town's Recreation, Culture and Parks staff, along with Building & Bylaw Department were directly consulted with their suggestions considered and/or incorporated into the final draft of the documents. .

If Council approves the recommendations contained herein, additional consultation with external agencies (Ontario Provincial Police, Downtown Business Improvement Area, the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce and the community, particularly property owners with potential film assets, will be engaged.

FINANCIAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

Most municipalities charge permit and related fees in order to recover some or all of the costs related to reviewing and enabling filming to occur in their municipality. Based on the research conducted, it appears most of the fees are at a modest level, perhaps with the intent to incentivize more film production in any given municipality. Further, some municipalities (London) have lower requirements for student or other smaller scale production. Again, this is likely for reasons of not discouraging these smaller, lower budget productions from taking place in the municipality.

The Development Commissioner is proposing the following fee schedule be implemented through the Town's Rates & Fees bylaw at the end of the three year pilot project should the Town decide to proceed with attracting film productions to the community.

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Municipality	Permit Fee	Administration Fee	Security Deposit	Associated Costs (policing, fire, public works)	Insurance
Tillsonburg	\$100 (permit and 1 st day of shooting)	\$100 per additional day or request	\$1,000	Responsibility of production company	Minimum of \$5 M but \$2 M for smaller/student productions
Brant County	\$375 (permit and 1 st day of shooting)	\$100 per additional day	N/A	Responsibility of production company	Minimum of \$5 M
Brantford	\$0 (crew size up to 15) \$50 (crew size 15-99) \$100 (crew size over 100)	\$90 plus 5% admin fee on facility, space and parking rentals, plus hourly fee for additional film liaison staff support	N/A	Responsibility of production company	Minimum of \$5 M per incident - \$10 M aggregate
Cambridge	\$105	\$1,000/request	\$5,000	Responsibility of production company	Minimum of \$2 M
Kitchener	\$105	\$1,000/request	\$5,000	Responsibility of production company	Minimum of \$2 M
London	\$102/day (commercial/for profit); \$51/flat (Not for Profit); \$0 (student); \$25.50 (B Roll)	N/A	N/A	Use of City vehicles (\$50/transaction) Responsibility of production company	Minimum of \$5 M per incident - \$25 million (aircraft), \$5 million (watercraft)

In order to implement the Film Policy on a three year, pilot-project basis, the staff complement (full-time contract) in the Economic Development & Marketing Department will have to be maintained for the next three years. The draft budget as submitted includes \$65,000 in funding towards this contract position. This would be a continuation of the current contract, but with additional funding. This position would also be responsible for other tasks within the Economic Development and Marketing Department. If Council approves the above recommendation, the anticipated staffing request will be included in the 2025 budget deliberations.

In terms of application fee revenues from the pilot project, these are anticipated to be foregone for the duration of the pilot project, albeit with any municipal staffing costs directly incurred from a film project being invoiced to the film production company.

CORPORATE GOALS

How does this report support the corporate goals identified in the Community Strategic Plan?

- Lifestyle and amenities
- Customer service, communication and engagement
- Business attraction, retention and expansion
- Community growth
- Connectivity and transportation
- Not Applicable

Does this report relate to a specific strategic direction or project identified in the Community Strategic Plan? Please indicate section number and/or any priority projects identified in the plan.

Goal – Within the Community, Tillsonburg will strive to offer all residents the amenities, services and attractions they require to enjoy balanced lifestyles

Strategic Direction – Increase opportunities to enjoy culture, events and leisure activities in Tillsonburg

Priority Project – *Immediate Term* - Filming Location Registry

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A – Film Policy By-Law
- Appendix B – Film Permit Application
- Appendix C – Film Production Checklist
- Appendix D – Film Location Inventory