

To: SPECIAL COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 2/15/2022

Subject: Annual Film Report 2020/2021

Submitted By: James Goodram, Director of Economic Development

Prepared By: Devon Hogue, Business Information Officer

Report No.: 22-004-CRE

File No.: M01FI

Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 22-002-CRE Annual Film Report 2020/2021 be received;

AND THAT filming be incorporated into the upcoming Economic Development Strategy process for review and future planning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose:

This report provides film project information, including:

- The number of film permits issued and inquiries received;
- Estimated local economic impact of completed film projects;
- Key projects, opportunities and activities relating to the portfolio;
- A comparison of this information to previous years.

Key Findings:

- Despite pandemic related interruptions throughout 2020 and 2021, Cambridge has remained an in-demand destination for location filming; with 2021 exceeding the previous record of annual days of filming set in 2019 (61 days of filming in 2019);
- Film inquiries and projects completed were lower than usual in 2020, however staff found numerous opportunities to grow the portfolio through participation in a variety of industry committees;

- 2020 saw film inquiries reduced by 21% (59 inquiries) compared to 2019 (75 inquiries), and days of filming reduced by 55% (27 days of filming completed in 2020 vs 61 in 2019).
- 2021 saw film inquiries increase 10% (65 inquiries) over 2020 (59 inquiries), and days of filming increase approximately 178% over 2020 totals (75 days of filming in 2021 vs 27 in 2020). As noted above, this exceeded the previous annual record for days of filming set in 2019 by approximately 23%.
- Utilizing industry projects as placemaking opportunities through incorporation of GIS technology has been a successful endeavour and encouraged a greater sense of pride surrounding industry projects.

Financial Implications:

Fees are charged to the film industry on a cost recovery basis to encourage a location budget be spent within the community in the impacted businesses, as opposed to being a revenue generating activity for the city. Fees were collected as follows in 2021:

Permit Fees:	\$675
Administration Fees:	\$8,000
Parking Fees:	\$14,707
Miscellaneous Fees:	\$335
Total:	\$23,717

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

- ☐ Strategic Action; or
☒ Core Service

Objective(s): PLACEMAKING - Promote and create a wide range of destinations and activities that capitalize on the beauty of the rivers and heritage buildings

Strategic Action: Not Applicable

Program: Film Cambridge

Core Service: Film Cambridge

Filming in Cambridge continues to be a popular endeavor for the city from both the client and resident/business perspectives. Film projects highlight the beautiful aesthetics of Cambridge, in addition to being a strong source of community pride. A suite of digital assets have been developed to promote the portfolio (attached as [“Links to Digital](#)

[Assets](#)” within the attached Annual Film Report), and encourage visitors and residents alike to explore popular public film locations while celebrating community successes.

BACKGROUND:

This report is being brought forward to provide Council with information on activities that have occurred since 2020.

ANALYSIS:

The report attached as [Appendix ‘A’ - “Lights, Camera, Action Report”](#) is a review of film activity over the past two years.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

There is no existing corporate by-law, however, filming is addressed by Region of Waterloo by-law 05-075. The internal film policy will be reviewed and updated as part of the Economic Development workplan in 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Fees are charged to the film industry on a cost recovery basis to encourage a location budget be spent within the community in the impacted businesses, as opposed to being a revenue generating activity for the city. Fees were collected as follows in 2021:

Permit Fees:	\$675
Administration Fees:	\$8,000
Parking Fees:	\$14,707
Miscellaneous Fees:	\$3345
Total:	\$23,717

PUBLIC VALUE:

Leadership:

This portfolio contributes to residents’ pride of place by promoting many unique areas of the community locally, as well as to a global audience.

Transparency:

To ensure transparency, staff communicate upcoming film projects through news items on the investcambridge.ca website, to site subscribers through email notification, and to the broader community through both traditional and social media. Additionally, staff contact information is included on film industry notification letters to ensure residents and businesses in the area of impact have contact information should there be questions or concerns relating to a project.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Not Applicable

PUBLIC INPUT:

Posted publicly as part of the report process.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

There was no internal/external consultation undertaken.

CONCLUSION:

Film and television production is a rapidly growing creative sector, not only within Ontario, but globally. Interest in Cambridge continues to increase, and expand outside of the regularly used locations; with one project (Culprits) using all three core areas during their two-day shoot schedule in October of 2021. The community has an opportunity to capitalize on past successes and grow a tangible industry locally with a more strategic focus on attraction, marketing and workforce development programs and opportunities. These opportunities will be addressed both in the development of a City of Cambridge filming policy, and as part of the Economic Development Strategy development.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has been reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer and City Solicitor.

It has been reviewed and approved by the Director, Deputy City Manager and City Manager.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. [22-002-CRE Appendix A – “Lights, Camera, Action Update” – 2020/2021 Film Activity Report](#)

Lights, Camera, Action Update



2020/2021 Film Activity Update

Prepared by
Economic Development Division
Corporate Enterprise Department

Background

History of Film Portfolio in Cambridge

Since 2015, Cambridge has grown film inquiries by 160%, from 25 to 65 inquiries in 2021, and days of filming by 400% from 15 in 2015 to 75 in 2021. Previous to 2015, Cambridge occasionally hosted community favourites such as “Murdoch Mysteries” and “Nikita”, but did not have the critical mass of inquiries and projects currently enjoyed throughout the city. Growth of the portfolio truly began to gain traction in 2015/2016 with projects such as Stephen King’s “11-22-63” which filmed in Hespeler, and “The Handmaid’s Tale”, which continues to film in Cambridge with each successive season. These projects served as a catalyst for the film industry, proving that the community could efficiently and effectively facilitate (and tolerate) larger scale production. Economic Development created a corporate film team to respond to inquiries, and built a client focused process, based in customer service and streamlining approvals. It was this shift that was key to Cambridge’s growing success. Additionally, staff began to actively market the unique projects that chose to make Cambridge their home, broadly promoting the community as a film friendly city and highlighting frequently filmed areas to residents and visitors in an effort to build community pride in place.

This first annual film report is being brought forward to share with Council and the greater community, the activity that has taken place over the past two years to celebrate the city’s progress.

2020/2021 Statistics

Pandemic Impact on Film Program in Cambridge

As with the many industries, 2020 saw numerous challenges for the film and television sector. This creative industry was paused between March and June of 2020, while various provincial and federal ministries worked collaboratively with studios and industry representatives to develop solid health and safety guidance and re-entry plans.

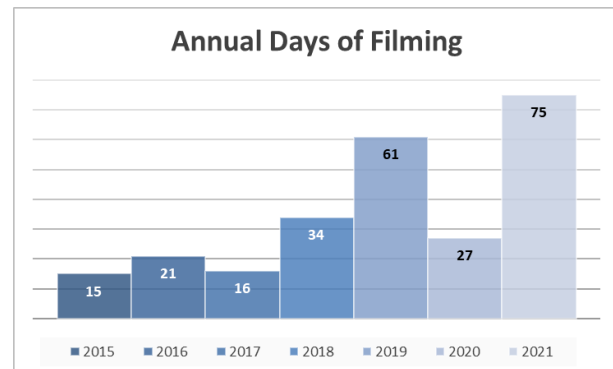
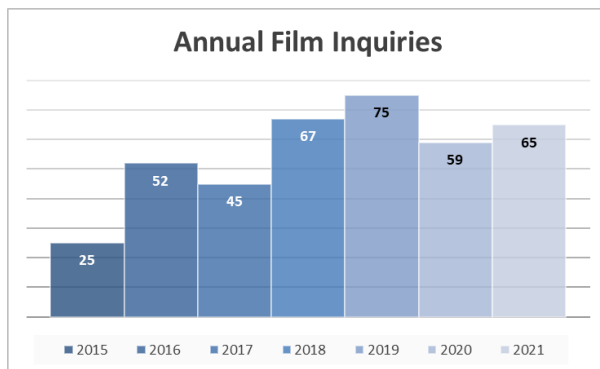
Despite the loss of approximately four months of activity, staff fielded over 59 film inquiries and facilitated 27 days of filming for 2020, including the first film permit in recent history to be issued in the Preston Town Centre for community favourite, “Murdoch Mysteries”.

In 2021, Cambridge suspended the issuance of film permits from January to June during the provincial stay at home order. The first project to film in 2021 occurred in June for the Amazon Prime Video series “Reacher” (which premiered on February 4, 2022).

2021 Inquiries and Filming Days

2021 was been incredibly busy for the film and television industry locally. Some observations:

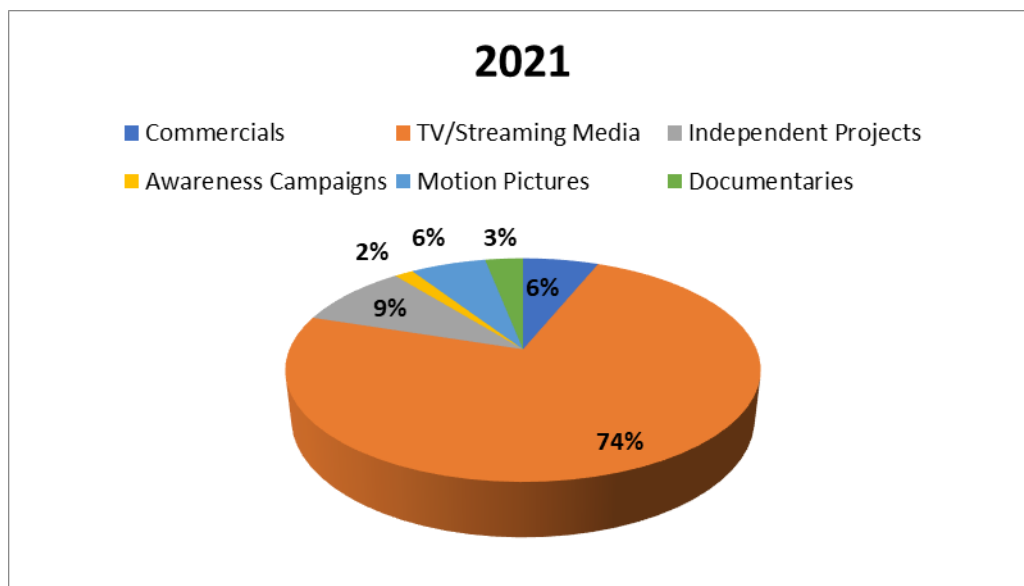
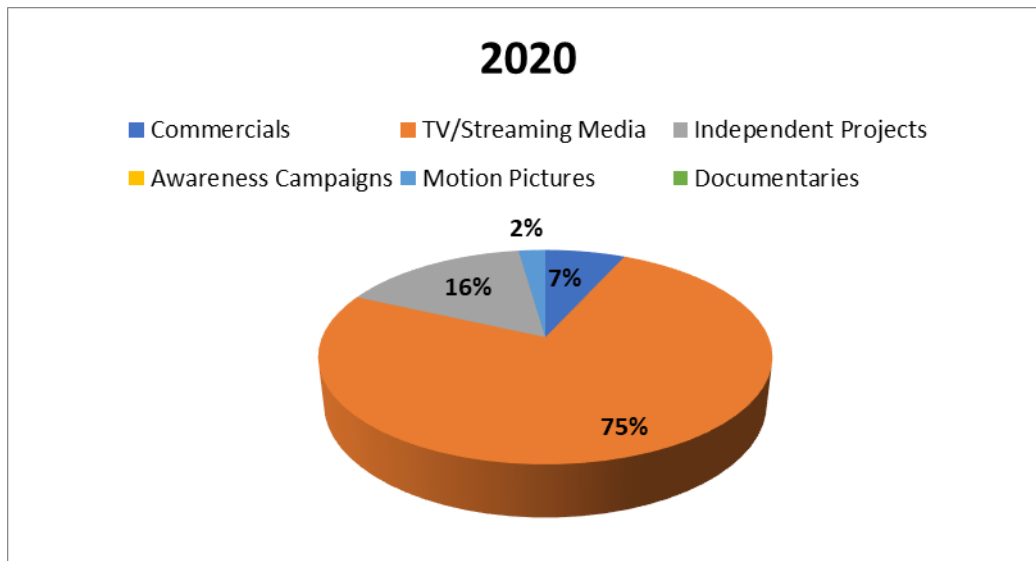
- **Inquiries:** Historically, the average number of annual film inquiries is 54 (based on calculations between 2015 and 2020), however film inquiries in 2021 surpassed that number by 20% for a total of 65.
- **Days of Filming:** Likewise, the average number of days of filming annually is 29 based on those same calculations, and days of filming in 2021 exceeded that number by 259% or 46 days for a total of 75 days of filming. This increase is despite the local moratorium on film projects between January and July of 2021 during the provincial stay at home order.



One reason for the dramatic increase in days of filming for 2021, was the use of a local private asset as a temporary studio space for 34 days to film two seasons of a Food Network competition program. In addition to an estimated economic impact of approximately \$250,000 to the local hospitality sector (impact was self reported by the production, and confirmed by local accommodation providers), this project also donated approximately 1,600 pounds of food to the Cambridge Food Bank during their stay in Cambridge. As more streaming media providers enter the market and demand for new content increases, the desire for studio space outside of the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) grows. Cambridge is poised to capitalize on this expansion due to the proximity to skilled talent, the growing reputation as a film friendly community, a strong library of diverse film assets and an ideal location on the 401.

Film Projects in Cambridge 2020-2021

Both 2020 and 2021 followed a typical inquiry format, with Television and Streaming Media projects comprising the majority of inquiries received. A listing of some key projects filming in 2020/2021 may be found below under [List of Projects Filmed in Cambridge 2020/2021](#).



Local Economic Impact

Between 2016 and 2021, staff estimates the local economic impact of this industry to be approximately \$6.27 million as outlined in the table below. This impact is calculated as money spent in local businesses, restaurants and hotels, in addition to funds donated to local community groups and spent in rental/parking fees. These numbers are self reported by the industry as part of the permitting process, and are based on the anticipated local spend excluding wages and transportation costs.

Moving forward, the application process will also include a section for “Number of Hotel Stays” to further track the economic impact of this industry. Staff continue to work with Ontario Creates through our municipal advocacy group to develop economic impact modelling for use at the municipal level, as this has been identified as a challenge for all municipalities with active film programs.

	Inquiries	Completed Projects	Days of Filming	Estimated Economic Impact
2015	25	12	15	
2016	52	15	21	\$ 1,118,000.00
2017	45	15	16	\$ 303,000.00
2018	67	22	34	\$ 2,281,400.00
2019	75	18	61	\$ 1,025,300.00
2020	67	22	27	\$ 276,000.00
2021	64	20	75	\$ 1,267,000.00
				\$ 6,270,700.00

2020/2021 Staff Activities

Industry Activities

Staff were invited to participate in weekly meetings with Ontario Creates to support and advise on key issues relating to the film industry (Green initiatives, Health and Safety requirements, development of provincially cohesive film policies), and continue to meet with them on this weekly basis.

In 2020, staff were invited to join the board of advisors for the Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance (SOFA) to support efforts to grow the industry outside of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), specifically across southwestern Ontario. The SOFA board of advisors is comprised of a broad range of professionals, from directors and actors, union representatives and educational partners, including representation from Walt Disney Studios. The mandate of the group is to encourage growth and investment from the film industry throughout southwestern Ontario through promotion and advocacy.

Community Engagement Activities

Staff also presented to various community groups throughout the course of the pandemic to share local successes across a diverse group of stakeholders (local Rotary Clubs, Probus Clubs, MacDougall Cottage, Doors Open Waterloo Region, and Family and Children’s Services of Waterloo Region), in an effort to inspire broader community engagement and support for the portfolio.

Notable Activities in 2020/2021

Staff have also been evolving the City's film program in the following ways:

- **Film Walking Tours:** Building upon the success of previous film asset mapping projects, a partnership between Archives, Technology Services, and Economic Development lead to the introduction of a new [digital walking tour of locations used by "The Handmaid's Tale"](#), with a focus on their connection to our historic community spaces. By combining historical information with popular film locations, it encourages residents to become more connected to the community, and take further ownership and pride in public spaces. Plans are underway to expand the suite of assets to include a similar tool for the Canadian classic, "Murdoch Mysteries".
- **Online Permitting Process:** Economic Development staff also worked collaboratively with Technology Services to bring the film permitting and payment process online, which launched as part of the new Amanda 7 upgrade.

What's Next

As the industry grows throughout the province and more municipalities are attempting to attract these opportunities to their communities, Cambridge is poised to develop a strategy for the future, to retain and grow the film portfolio. Staff will incorporate this required work into the upcoming Economic Development Strategy and Film Policy development, with a view towards ensuring a seamless process for clients across the region, potentially increasing production volumes regionally.

Conclusion

Film and television production is a rapidly growing creative sector, not only within Ontario, but globally. Interest in Cambridge continues to increase, and expand outside of the regularly used locations; with one project (Culprits) using all three core areas during their two-day shoot schedule. The community has an opportunity to capitalize on past successes and grow a tangible industry locally with a more strategic focus on attraction, marketing and workforce development programs and opportunities.

List of Projects Filmed in Cambridge 2020/2021

- The Handmaid's Tale
- Letters to Satan Claus
- Hotel Paranormal
- The Odd Squad
- The Good Witch
- Murdoch Mysteries
- Killer Deal
- My Fair Snowman
- The Perfect Pairing
- Reacher
- Fire Masters
- Ruby and the Well
- Locke & Key
- Hardy Boys
- Culprits

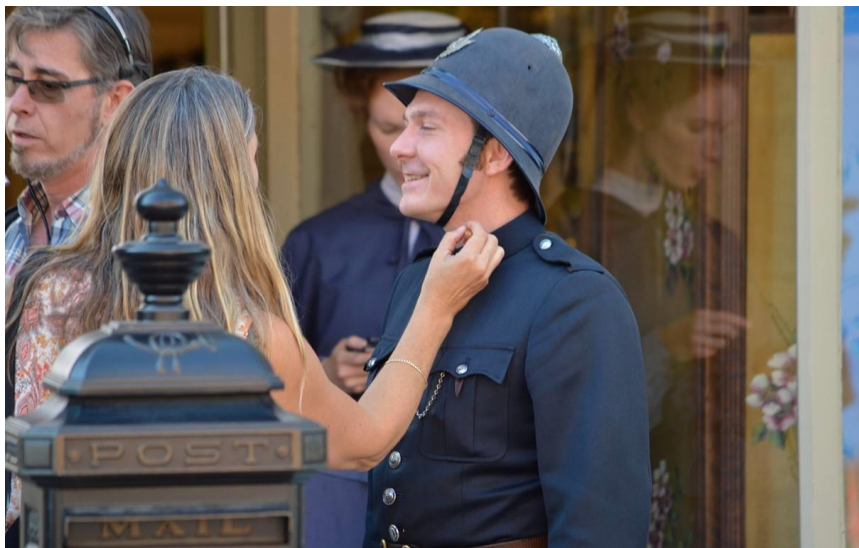


Photo by Carlos Simoes, used with permission – “Murdoch Mysteries”



Staff Photo above and left – “Culprits”

Staff photo below – “The Odd Squad”



Links to Digital Assets

- [Handmaid's Tale Walking Tour](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4c99e1eec87841e4a195c2a2d3febf0) -
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4c99e1eec87841e4a195c2a2d3febf0>
- [Hollywood Cambridge – Eight projects that will make you wish you lived in Cambridge](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7c1eec89101740a19721ad7ad9de9cb9) -
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7c1eec89101740a19721ad7ad9de9cb9>
- [Filming in Cambridge Location Map](https://cityofcambridge.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Shortlist/index.html?appid=9c95090c8eb54736a24719c03153d2ca) -
<https://cityofcambridge.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Shortlist/index.html?appid=9c95090c8eb54736a24719c03153d2ca>
- [Handmaid's Tale Location Map](https://cityofcambridge.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Shortlist/index.html?appid=cdc3cfc4f3e942598a50281ba1b71b73) –
<https://cityofcambridge.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Shortlist/index.html?appid=cdc3cfc4f3e942598a50281ba1b71b73>