



Alternative formats and communication supports available upon request. Please contact accessibility@brantford.ca or 519-759-4150 for assistance.

Date March 2, 2021 **Report No.** 2021-5

To Chair and Members
Committee of the Whole – Operations and Administration

From Brian Hutchings
Chief Administrative Officer

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item ☐
Item For Consideration ☒

2.0 Topic **Film Annual Report (2020) and Policy Amendments** **[Financial Impact: None]**

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report No. 2021-5 regarding the Film Annual Report (2020) and Policy Amendments BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to prepare the necessary By-law for presentation to City Council to amend By-law 70-2010 to repeal and replace Film Policy (Corporate-046); and
- C. THAT the City Clerk BE REQUESTED to update the Corporate Policy Manual to include this new Policy.

4.0 Executive Summary

The City of Brantford had a record-breaking year for filming in 2020, despite a three-month provincial shut down of the industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this report is to highlight the 2020 success stories, outline the municipal policies and processes that have evolved out of the 2019 Film Strategy, and highlight key next steps as they relate to the changing nature

of film industry amidst the pandemic and further municipal actions aimed at growing this sector in 2021.

Throughout 2020, City staff responded to 32 film inquiries, resulting in eight television and two commercial productions, most notably; *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Departure*, *Frankie Drake Mysteries*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, and *All-Round Champion*. These productions had an estimated impact of \$1.3 million on Brantford specific budgets, with an estimated \$121,800 in City direct revenues.

2020 was also a year for collaboration in the film industry in Brantford. City staff created a cross-departmental internal working group, and as well as a virtual group of regional and municipal film liaisons that began discussing the effects of the pandemic on the filming industry.

City staff is proposing to Repeal and Replace the current Film Policy (Appendix E), implemented in 2020, with several amendments to streamline and increase efficiencies of filming processes, both internally and externally.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to inform City Council of the investment attraction efforts behind filming activities in Brantford in 2020 and the subsequent economic impact on the local economy. One year post implementation of the Film Policy, City staff would also like to take this opportunity to amend some of the verbiage, requirements and terms contained within the inaugural film Policy that was approved by Council in December 2019.

6.0 Background

In December 2019, Brantford City Council approved the first City of Brantford Film Policy and Strategy (2019-456). The Film Policy was developed to streamline municipal services and create a business-friendly environment for filming in Brantford. It also seeks to ensure the long-term, ongoing viability of filming in Brantford and provide a framework and strategy to address short- and long-term challenges and opportunities.

Council approved the following recommendations:

- A. THAT Report 2019-456, City of Brantford Film Policy and Strategy, BE RECEIVED; and

-
- B. THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to prepare the necessary By-law for presentation to City Council to amend By-law 70-2010 to adopt Brantford Film (Corporate-046) Policy; and
 - C. THAT the City Clerk BE REQUESTED to update the Corporate Policy Manual to include this new Policy; and
 - D. THAT staff report back to City Council in Q1 2021 to provide an update on the impact of the film sector as part of the Economic Development and Tourism Department 2020 Year in Review annual report.

Following a recommendation in the 2017 Economic Development Strategy, the Economic Development and Tourism Department developed a formalized approach to encourage and support film and television production in Brantford. The results of this approach are evident in the development of a Film Policy, in the collaboration of City staff across many departments, and in the growing number of productions leveraging Brantford's unique locations and film-friendly hospitality.

Since the adoption of the Film Policy in 2019, the City has seen a steady growth in the number of inquiries and interest from production companies that are beginning to recognize Brantford's film-friendly attributes. Despite a three month shut down of filming within the province, Brantford received 32 inquiries and welcomed 10 productions to the City in 2020 resulting in an estimated \$121,800 in direct City revenues. City staff has worked closely with community partners to ensure a seamless experience for visiting productions, facilitating discussions between local residents and business owners regarding the impact of filming on our community.

Acting as a liaison between the productions and other City departments, Economic Development and Tourism staff established relationships on both sides in order to further improve customer service delivery. With feedback from industry professionals and the cross-departmental working group, staff has identified efficiencies and the requirement to clarify some areas in the Film Policy to reflect gaps identified over the course of the last year and the needs of the industry as it evolves.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

This report refers to the Film Policy (191-2019) and supports the recommendations from the City of Brantford Economic Development and Tourism Strategy update (2016), to:

-
- Create a film and new media action plan to address the business case for the sector;
 - Continue building and updating the inventory of sites and photographs for the film industry; and
 - Create a single point of contact for film industry inquiries.

This report also supports the following recommendations from the Municipal Cultural Plan (2014):

- Create an environment where arts, culture and heritage flourish, enhance civic pride, and function as an economic driver for the community; and
- Develop an economic investment attraction strategy for the cultural industry and create entrepreneurs, using the full range of assets that the community has to offer.

Finally, this report aligns with the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts' 2019-2022 Business Plan, specifically:

- Goal 5: Strengthen internal and external communication; and
- Goal 6: Support efforts to increase capacity and suitability of cultural resources within the City.

8.0 Input from Other Sources

This report was prepared with input from City staff collected through the cross-departmental working group, composed of representatives from the following departments: Brantford Fire, Brantford Police, Economic Development and Tourism, Environmental Services, Parking, Parks Services, Traffic, Transit, and Operational Services.

Feedback was also incorporated from The Ontario Film Commission (Ontario Creates) and the external film working group, composed of representatives from neighbouring municipalities, including: County of Brant, City of Burlington, City of Cambridge, Region of Durham, Haldimand County, City of Hamilton, Huron County, City of Kitchener, City of London, City of Mississauga, City of Oshawa, City of Sault Ste. Marie and City of Waterloo.

9.0 Analysis

9.1 Importance of the Film Industry

According to the Motion Picture Association of Canada, the filming industry in Canada created more than 180,900 jobs in 2019 – from special effects technicians to makeup artists to sound editors, carpenters and more – generating a GDP of \$12.8 billion for the Canadian economy.¹ The film and television industry supports a dynamic creative economy in Canada, employing workers in every province, across a diversity of skill sets and trades; when a movie or television show shoots on location, it brings with it jobs, revenue, and related infrastructure development.² Physical productions provide an immediate boost to the local economy, creating a ripple effect on job creation and innovation in other industries. In some cases, popular productions can also boost tourism.

Locally, filming is recognized as an economic driver that supports our hospitality and tourism industry immensely. The popularity of these film and television productions creates more opportunities within the industry as Brantford continues to be recognized on a wider scale.

For example, the November 2020 production of *The Handmaid's Tale* welcomed an estimated cast and crew of 300 while securing 2,340 hotel nights with a local production budget of \$800,000.

9.2 COVID-19 Impacts on Filming Industry

Ontario Creates reports that a Nordicity Study from April 2020 on the impact of COVID-19 on the Canadian screen-based media production sector estimated that between March-June 2020, \$2.5 billion in screen-based media production volume would be permanently lost, \$1.4 billion of

¹ [https://www.mpa-canada.org/research_docs/profile-2019-economic-report-on-the-screen-based-media-production-industry-in-canada/#:~:text=In%202018%2D2019%2C%20Total%20Film,FTE%20jobs%20\(%2B2.4%25\)](https://www.mpa-canada.org/research_docs/profile-2019-economic-report-on-the-screen-based-media-production-industry-in-canada/#:~:text=In%202018%2D2019%2C%20Total%20Film,FTE%20jobs%20(%2B2.4%25))

² <https://www.mpa-canada.org/what-we-do/driving-economic-growth/>

which was tied to labour.³ On average, over 162,000 total spin-off and direct workers would be affected in any given month in the time period.⁴

Filming was not permitted in the first provincial lockdown and was halted from the middle of March to the middle of June in 2020. Filming was permitted to reopen in Phase 2 of the province's reopening, with enhanced safety measures and protocols as outlined in [Section 21](#). These protocols were developed in cooperation with the relevant unions, guilds and various levels of government, and have been endorsed by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

The impact of the pandemic changes on a day-to-day basis, and with the province's new Reopening Ontario Framework⁵, filming is permissible in all five stages, including lockdown. The Province of Ontario advised on January 12, 2021, that filming was safe enough to continue even during the stay at home orders so long as productions adhere to the public health measures listed in the 'red' zone.

On January 15, the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) suspended the distribution of film permits until February 23, 2021 at the earliest. This decision was done in concert with the suspension of special event permits and was based off perceived community optics of visitors coming to Brantford and jeopardizing the safety of the community for filming purposes.

Ontario Creates, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, delivered a rapid testing pilot program and was able to provide COVID-19 tests to 22 of 36 active productions in Ontario in November. This allowed for productions to do their own on-site testing to keep their cast and crew safe.

Film productions are treated as a work site and do not adhere to the private gathering sizes. As of February 10, 2021, film productions are allowed to

³ <https://cmpa.ca/press-releases/canadas-film-and-tv-production-sector-faces-2-5-billion-hit-due-to-covid-19/>

⁴ <https://ontariocreates.ca/research/industry-profile/ip-filmtv>

⁵ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-response-framework-keeping-ontario-safe-and-open>

have 50 performers on set at any time. All staff members are required to wear masks and physically distance six feet or two meters wherever possible. The only staff exempt from wearing masks are on-screen cast and the camera operator.

9.3 2020 Productions in Brantford

The Economic Development and Tourism Department welcomed ten productions to the City of Brantford in 2020—a new record for the City—despite a three-month provincial shutdown of the filming industry from mid-March to mid-June. Brantford welcomed two productions in late February and early March prior to the shutdown, and eight more between August and December. The list includes two commercials (*Kid Food Nation* and *Elle Canada*) and eight television productions:

- *Blood and Water*
- *Murdoch Mysteries*
- *Mayday*
- *Departure*
- *Frankie Drake Mysteries*
- *All-Round Champion*
- The popular Canadian dystopian television series, *The Handmaid's Tale*, filmed twice in Brantford in 2020.

9.4 Economic Impact of Local Productions in 2020

In 2020, Brantford had its strongest year for filming since detailed reporting began in 2018. While an exact measure of this impact of the local economy is difficult to gauge (e.g. gathering complete data about off-set meals or last minute supplies purchased), Ontario Creates is working to develop a consistent formula for calculating the economic impact of filming that can be applicable for and comparable to municipalities across the province. In 2020, Brantford welcomed 10 productions resulting in an estimated:

- \$1.3 million in Brantford specific budgets
- \$121,800 direct City revenues

- 3,000 hotel nights
- 129 total prep, film, and wrap days in Brantford
- 1,013 total cast and crew in Brantford

Staff will be exploring ways to further measure the local economic impact of film. City staff is working with other municipalities as well as Ontario Creates to develop a formula that accurately measures local indirect impact.

9.5 Legacy Projects

Through the encouragement of municipal staff, many past productions have taken to giving back to the community in more tangible and long term ways through Legacy Projects related to their production. Such givebacks exemplify the commitment of the film industry to enhancing relationships with leaders, businesses and residents in Brantford and continue the initiative since its start in 2018. Last year, *The Handmaid's Tale* generously supported the Downtown Brantford BIA, the Brantford Food Bank, and the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts. To formalize this request in 2020, Economic Development and Tourism staff, with help from the Communications and Community Engagement Department, designed a one-page Legacy Project letter to share with productions while they are filming in Brantford (Appendix A).

9.6 Film Investment and Attraction Efforts

The majority of movie theatres were closed down throughout 2020 and, as a result, the filming industry is seeing a dramatic shift away from movie productions and moving towards keeping up with the massive demand for at-home television consumption. City staff has worked closely with Ontario Creates to keep up with current projects and take advantage of marketing efforts that can further increase and attract filming interest in Brantford.

Completed projects and initiatives related to film investment and attraction in 2020 are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Film Investment and Attraction Efforts (2020)

Project/Initiative	Summary
a) Calls with Ontario Creates to discuss COVID-19 impacts on filming, new projects, regional updates	Attended 41 weekly calls
b) Ontario Creates Film Locations Library	Updated 6 locations with photographs
c) Ontario Green Screen	2 staff received Certificate of Completion in Climate and Sustainable Production
d) Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)	City staff attended the virtual TIFF conference from September 10-14, 2020. City staff attended 16 lectures and had the opportunity to connect with filmmakers and representatives from other municipalities.
e) Production Paradise	Featured 12 locations on this international database used by filmmakers and location scouts.
f) Film Brochure	With help from Communications division, City staff developed a 4-page digital brochure to highlight film friendly assets, requirements and tourism information. (Appendix B)
g) Film Fam Tour	City staff hosted Patrick Brennan from the Toronto Star, showcasing 12 locations in Brantford. Brennan will be writing about <i>Departure</i> , which filmed here in September 2020, once it airs in 2021. (Appendix C)
h) <i>The Cuban</i> Premiere	1,300 local households participated in 2 free screenings. Originally intended as a live, red carpet event, <i>The Cuban</i> premiere was held virtually due to COVID-19. The free screening was followed by a Q&A with the Director, Screenplay writer, Producer(s),

	<p>and the four lead actors from the film (Appendix D).</p> <p>Following the event, the City offered a 'spot the Brantford and County locations' contest with five opportunities to win autographed swag from <i>The Cuban</i>.</p>
i) E-Newsletters	<p>3 e-newsletters were distributed in 2020. The primary target audience of the e-newsletter is Ontario film location professionals. The e-news includes reports on film industry news, updated COVID-19 procedures, recent productions and highlights locations</p>

9.7 Film Policy

Since the implementation of the Film Policy (CORPORATE-046) in early 2020, staff has heard positive feedback from film productions regarding the structure and transparency of the policy.

City staff is proposing several amendments to the Film Policy to reflect some of what we have learned in the last year working with an increased amount of film productions. The recommended changes to the Film Policy (Appendix E) are meant to provide greater transparency, clarity and simplification. These include:

- Removing the insurance and indemnification requirements out of the Policy and into a signed agreement to better protect the City, allow for more frequent updating of minimum thresholds and provide greater transparency and clarity to the film company;
- Simplify the permit application process;
- Further clarify the noise bylaw, road and sidewalk closure;
- Formally exempt City-related video and photo activities;
- Identify responsibilities relating to restoring municipal spaces used or occupied by productions;
- Remove the formatting requirements for the filming notification letter;
- Distinguish between Applicants, Film Companies and Productions;
- Strengthen language around cost responsibilities; and
- Insert phrasing about public health crises and declared emergencies.

The proposed revisions include suggestions from Legal, Risk Management, Operational Services, Communications and Clerks. Proposed revisions were also reviewed during the City's film cross-departmental working group virtual meeting in January 2021.

9.8 Film Working Groups

9.8.1 Cross-Departmental Working Group

Filming efforts are centralized and streamlined through the Economic Development and Tourism Department. Recognizing that the filming industry touches many departments on a regular basis, forming a cross-departmental working group was necessary in order to collect input from other departments and to ensure that municipal efforts are aligned with regards to permits, fees and processes.

Economic Development and Tourism staff created an internal cross-departmental working group (Appendix F) in 2020 that meets quarterly. The purpose of this group is to relay feedback received from filmmakers to ensure a seamless production process. The representatives involved in this working group were selected because their position frequently interacts and overlaps with filming activities.

Municipal/Regional Film Discussion Group

Economic Development and Tourism staff also created a municipal/regional film discussion group in order to connect with other film liaisons in neighbouring or similar sized Ontario municipalities who were also preparing for the reopening of the filming industry. This highly productive and mutually beneficial group has met biweekly since the end of May and has decided to continue those meetings on a monthly basis into 2021. This group includes a much smaller group than the Ontario Creates participants and is more focused to this region and communities of similar size, which helps City of Brantford staff to compare fees, permits and processes in order to create a more streamlined effect in Ontario. This film discussion group includes representatives from: County of Brant, City of Burlington, City of Cambridge, Region of Durham, Haldimand County, City of Hamilton, Huron County, City of Kitchener, City of London, City of Mississauga, City of Oshawa, City of Sault Ste. Marie and City of Waterloo.

9.9 Ongoing Communication and Reporting

Economic Development and Tourism staff is responsible for working cooperatively with productions and communicating filming activities both internally and externally. This ensures that the production is aware of requirements necessary for filming and current restrictions and also keeps City Council, staff and the public informed of potential filming impacts.

Film communications activities undertaken by the Economic Development and Tourism Department are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Film Communication Initiatives (2020)

Initiative	Description	Notes
a) Information Updates	Economic Development and Tourism Department staff releases 1 to 3 days prior to a film production arriving in Brantford. It includes information about the production; set-up, wrap-up and filming dates; and public impacts. Updates are e-mailed internally to City Council, General Managers, Directors and other City staff members.	11 Information Updates were sent in 2020.
b) Film Notices	Film notices include information about the production, including set-up, wrap-up, filming dates and public impacts. They are posted on the City of Brantford website and shared on social media.	9 Film Notices were posted in 2020.
c) Media Releases	City staff does not send media releases when productions are filming. Film-related media releases are typically to advertise events and to address filming concerns over public safety.	3 media releases were distributed in 2020.

9.10 Next Steps

Economic Development and Tourism staff expects that the number of productions filming in Brantford will increase again in 2021. As such, plans are well underway to increase marketing efforts in order to attract new productions. In partnership with Ontario Creates (OC), City staff will expand the current image library on the OC website in order to highlight new locations in Brantford. Staff will also work with a local videographer to create a 'Ready to Roll' highlight reel composed of both past productions and film-friendly locations. Increased partnership with local hotels and restaurants will also help to create discounts and packages to entice productions to support local while they are here, and possibly extend their trip.

City staff has received feedback that some of Brantford's fees are higher than other municipalities. In response to this feedback, staff invited Ontario municipalities and regions to share their fees related to film via a survey released on December 17, 2020. To date, 14 surveys have been received and staff will be analyzing these fees to ensure Brantford remains competitive with other jurisdictions, while also investigating other revenue sources that could be realized by the municipality

10.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

11.0 Conclusion

Interest in Brantford as a key location for film and television productions continues to grow, and creates significant positive economic impact for local individuals, businesses and municipal facilities. Each year, the Economic Development and Tourism Department responds to a growing number of inquiries and assists location scouts and producers with navigating the municipal process to ensure their project's success in Brantford. This growth would not be possible without City staff's keen attention to relationship building with the visiting productions and the cooperation of the cross-departmental working group. Moving forward into 2021, City staff will increase marketing efforts through the development of a film highlight reel and further expansion of the film photo database on the Ontario Creates website.

The proposed changes to the Film Policy work to further establish our community as a film-friendly destination, and align Brantford with competitive municipalities. City staff is excited for another great year of filming ahead and recognize that our natural assets, welcoming community and incredible customer service are just a few of the reasons that Brantford is being kept top of mind in the Ontario film industry.



Brian Hutchings

Chief Administrative Officer

Prepared by:

Kara Davey, Arts & Culture Development Officer

Kevin Dekok, Economic Development Officer

Attachments:

Appendix A: Legacy Projects

Appendix B: Film Brochure

Appendix C: Film Fam Tour

Appendix D: The Cuban Promotions

Appendix E: Proposed Film Policy Amendments

Appendix F: Cross Departmental Working Group Membership

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required

☒ yes ☐ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk

☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council?

☒ yes ☐ no