

## Filming in Hamilton: Update to Hamilton's BIA Advisory Committee

### Introduction

The purpose of this presentation is to provide members of Hamilton's Business Improvement Area (BIA) Advisory Committee with an update on filming in Hamilton, including a review of film activity in 2020 as well as information about expected demand and relevant industry trends that will be likely to impact BIAs in 2021.

### 2020 Recap: Impact of COVID-19

Like most industries, film and television production in 2020 was heavily impacted by the global pandemic. Film and television production shut down in mid-March, 2020, and the first productions returned to Hamilton in mid-July, followed by a surge of productions in the last four months of the year.

The strong return of filming in Hamilton has helped with overall economic recovery. Film and television productions reported spending just over \$53 million here in 2020, vs. approximately \$60 million in 2019. In other words, film and television production spending in Hamilton was down only 10% despite production being completely shut down for four months of the year.

### Productions Filmed in Hamilton in 2020

In total, 113 productions filmed in Hamilton in 2020, down just 20% from 141 in 2019. Encouragingly, about 70% of this business came to Hamilton after the shutdown, indicating a strong rebound and pointing to continued demand into 2021.

Some highlights amongst the many projects that filmed in Hamilton in 2020 include:

- The Handmaid's Tale
- See Season 2
- Nightmare Alley
- Titans
- Sneakerella
- Clarice
- Murdoch Mysteries
- Frankie Drake
- And many more...

### Forecasting for 2021: How the Hamilton Film Office works with Ontario Creates to anticipate demand

Ontario Creates is an agency to the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, and home to the Ontario Film Commission. The Film Commission attracts production business to the region and provides consultation, liaison, and scouting assistance, including through the maintenance of a digital locations library.

Staff meet virtually with the representatives of the Ontario Film Commission and other film offices across Ontario on a weekly basis. These meetings provide great insight into general demand for filming in Ontario and specific projects that are considering Hamilton.

### What to expect for 2021

Interest in filming in Ontario and within the GTHA in particular continues to be very strong. In Hamilton, we are on track to issue a record high number of permits for a first quarter. We have also had much more demand for assistance with planning for spring and summer shoots than is usual for the winter. We are anticipating that 2021 will be extremely busy for filming in Hamilton.

The industry has put a number of health and safety protocols in place in response to the pandemic. There is robust COVID-19 testing for all crew members as well as daily health screening and an on-site health and safety specialist who coordinates site-specific health and safety plans. In addition to the traditional technical trailers and equipment normally seen at a film set, we are seeing most productions set up a medical tent or health and safety headquarters, where cast and crew check in daily. With physical distancing, there is also an increased need for support spaces for background performers, wardrobe, hair and makeup, etc. Film activity is often spread across a higher number of physical spaces in addition to the main location.

### Opportunities:

As noted above, we expect a high volume of projects looking for locations to film in Hamilton and an increased need from productions to rent supporting spaces.

So far, the Ontario Regulations (82/20) have allowed for filming to proceed with specific health and safety conditions in all stages (grey to green) of reopening. This has provided an opportunity for some businesses that have had to temporarily close to rent space to film productions as a supplement to traditional revenue streams.

Any businesses that are interested in hosting filming are encouraged to list their property on the Ontario Film Commission's Digital Locations Library:

<https://digitallibrary.ontariocreates.ca/DigitalLibrary/Location/LocationSearch.aspx>.

Additionally, we encourage businesses that could work well as supporting space, or are interested in filming as a temporary/short term opportunity (but don't want to have a permanent listing in the database), to contact the Film Office. Staff receive scouting requests from productions on a daily basis and can help connect location managers with interested business owners.

The Film Office actively steers productions towards off-street parking. Anyone who would be interested in renting their off-street parking to film productions is strongly encouraged to get in touch with the Film Office. Even a small lot can be useful to help keep equipment off the sidewalk and street.

Productions often look for opportunities to give back to the neighbourhoods they work in. Film Office staff connect location managers directly with BIA leads to discuss this.

#### Questions or Concerns About Filming:

Film productions are guests in Hamilton and we expect them to show consideration to the community. When a request comes in for filming in a BIA, the process is for staff to connect the location manager with the BIA lead. This provides the BIA with the contact information for the staff person at the City who is most familiar with the file as well as the email and cell phone number for the location manager. The location manager is the crew member responsible for liaising between the production, the film office, and the neighbourhood.

We recommend notifying the production of any issues as soon as possible. Location managers are eager to address concerns before they escalate into problems.

#### Other ways to get help:

- Contact the Film Office's general line or email at 905-546-4233 or [film@hamilton.ca](mailto:film@hamilton.ca) – all film office staff have access to these channels and ensure they are monitored during business hours, even when individual staff are absent
- Contact the assistant location manager or production office at the numbers listed on the notification letter
- Approach any crew member, explain there is a concern and ask to speak to the location manager or assistant location manager
- For production vehicles parked illegally/without a permit, contact Parking Enforcement at 905-540-6000