

FILMONTARIO
FILM · TELEVISION · INTERACTIVE

2021 REPORT

Dear FilmOntario Members:

If 2020 was a year that began with a sense of optimism, energy, and growth, only to see everyone's plans change with the onset of the pandemic, in many ways 2021 was the opposite. While the year began in Ontario with the province under lockdown, and a 10-performer limit on set constraining production, the industry once again demonstrated that by joining together, we could keep people safe at work, create amazing content, and set the course for industry recovery and economic growth in the province.

As health conditions began to improve and the province slowly emerged from its lockdown, it was heartening to see signs of normalcy return. A highlight of the fall season was definitely the many [Ontario films that screened at TIFF](#), in front of live audiences and showing off not only great storytelling but also beautiful locations across the province. While we have learned over the past 20 months not to make too many predictions about the future, based on our experience we know that a united industry is a stronger industry.

A Focus on Health and Safety

Thanks to extensive collaboration, and in particular the work of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD)'s [Section 21 Committee](#), the industry developed robust health and safety protocols that permitted productions to get back to work during the summer of 2020. These protocols proved to be extremely effective in protecting film and television workers, even as case counts rose during the fall and winter. Communicating the effectiveness of the protocols to government officials, to obtain support for keeping the industry working, was a key priority during the first few months of the year.

The [Staying Safe on Set](#) video that we completed at the end of last year was used to demonstrate the protocols in action, and has been viewed more times than any of our other videos. We also collected data on testing results, which showed a positivity rate of less than .1% across all types of productions, proving to politicians and public health officials that our protocols were effective. In meetings with Toronto Public Health staff, senior Workplace Health and Safety officials, and Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries staff we were able to use this information to make the case for keeping our industry working while so many others were shut down.

In January, the Section 21 Guidelines were updated in response to feedback from the industry on how the guidelines were working and our evolving understanding of the nature of Covid-19. These revisions incorporated changes about ventilation, protocols for intimate scenes, and regular testing.

As a result of this industry collaboration and advocacy from FilmOntario and many of our partners, the 10-performer limit was raised to 50 performers on February 10. This is a testament to the hard work of all our members in applying the health and safety protocols on set – without your diligence, the work would not have been able to continue.

On June 30, the province moved into Step Two of its re-opening plan and the 50-performer limit was lifted. This was welcome news to the industry, as we experienced an extremely busy summer for both domestic and service production. The lifting of this limit did not mean a relaxation of the health and safety protocols, however, and our workplaces are continuing to operate safely.

In October, the Section 21 guidelines [were updated](#) once again to include language related to vaccination policies. FilmOntario would like to thank the members of the Section 21 Committee for their commitment to collaboration in continuing to update the guidelines, and thank all our members who worked together to follow protocols and keep the industry working in Ontario. We would also like to highlight the stellar work of Committee Co-chairs Jayson Mosek of NABET and Sean Porter of the CMPA in coordinating this work.

Continued Recovery

The 2021 Ontario Budget understandably focussed on the tools the province needed to emerge from the pandemic and start on the path to recovery. At FilmOntario, our [Budget submission](#) highlighted what our priorities were at the time: stable, predictable, and effective tax credits, supplementing the insurance support provided by the federal government in the Short-Term Compensation Fund, support for additional COVID costs incurred on set (particularly for domestic producers), and modernizing the tax credits.

Budget 2021 made significant investments in the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, which launched a re-vamped slate of programs in February, and the Skills Development Fund. While we would have liked to see more direct investment in the industry, we appreciate the government’s commitment to workforce development and regional production. As noted below, we continue to work with the Ministers’ Advisory Panel and engage in our own advocacy on the industry’s priorities for investment.

While it has by no means been an easy year for the industry, we are mindful of the fact that there are many other industries, particularly in the tourism and cultural sectors, that have faced even greater challenges due to the repeated need for closures and capacity limits in response to the public health emergency. While we continue to advocate strongly for the needs of our sector, we are balancing that with appreciation to the government for permitting our industry to continue to work when so many could not. The government’s recognition of the industry’s potential for growth means that we can be an important partner in Ontario’s economic recovery, and we intend to make sure that all parties are aware of that potential.

November’s Fall Economic Statement recognized that film and television is “a vibrant part of Ontario’s economy, drawing on the province’s skilled workers in high-tech production studios and local communities for filming locations.” It also re-committed to providing “stability and support” for the industry, continuing to work with the Advisory Panel to increase production, and made general commitments to regional economic development funds and workforce training.

“The film and television industry is a vibrant part of Ontario’s economy, drawing on the province’s skilled workers in high-tech production studios and local communities for filming locations.”

— Fall Economic Statement

It was gratifying to see the industry singled out for recognition in the Fall Economic Statement, as this is not extended to every sector. This recognition, and the commitments made, provide an excellent foundation for us to build on as we work with the government and all parties to make the argument for continued and enhanced investments.

The signs of the industry’s growth potential are not limited to government announcements. We have continued to see very high physical production levels through most of 2021. Our post-production, visual effects and animation houses are also reporting high levels of activity. We have also seen some ownership changes and restructuring in this part of the industry, as well as some major new companies setting up shop here.

We are also seeing major announcements of new investments in studio space in Ontario. In the Toronto region, projections indicate that we will have an additional 5.3 million square feet of studio space by 2025, an increase of 63 percent over current levels. This is in addition to studio projects in other parts of the province, including in Ottawa and northern Ontario.

These investments confirm that the current demand for screen-based content is not slowing down, and that Ontario is a great place to create that content. Without the government’s commitment to a stable business environment, this would be a far less attractive jurisdiction for such large investments. And as the physical infrastructure in the province continues to expand, and the post, visual effects and animation sectors continue to expand, we need to remain committed to expanding Ontario’s workforce by attracting and retaining with talented, well-trained and diverse on- and off-screen talent.

Ministers’ Film and Television Advisory Panel

At this time last year, we reported on the formation of the Ministers’ Film and Television Advisory Panel, with a mandate to report jointly to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries and the Minister of Finance with advice on industry trends, challenges, and opportunities to grow high-value film and television production in Ontario and maximize benefits for the province. The Panel’s Covid-19 report was submitted to the Minister in June 2020, with the Ministry issuing a [white paper](#) in December 2020 with some recommendations for cross-sectoral recovery.

While unfortunately the white paper focussed primarily on those sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, such as tourism and live events, it did re-state the government’s commitment to stable tax credits and commit to creating regional equity in film and television production by developing a strategy to identify film-friendly locations, build incentives for production and develop talent. This lay the groundwork for the Panel to continue its work to submit a final report to the Ministers in the fall of this year.

The Panel and FilmOntario continued to work to get clarification around which costs incurred due to Covid-related shutdowns would be eligible for the tax credits. Recently, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) posted [information](#) on which of these costs would be considered eligible expenditures for both the federal and provincial tax credits. Essentially, the eligible expenditures are limited to those incurred on set during production, including labour for new positions and the cost of PPE (for the service credit). Shutdown-related costs, such as holds, are not eligible. The Advisory Panel continues to ask that province rectify this situation and provide additional clarity.

A final draft of the Panel Report has now been submitted to Ministry staff for review. FilmOntario had significant representation on the Panel and we support its recommendations completely. While the specific recommendations are confidential until the report is released, in general terms they are in line with the priorities we have been advocating for as an organization, including modernizing and streamlining the tax credits, investing in workforce development, ensuring companies in our industry have equitable access to government training and economic development programs in all regions of the province, championing our industry and investing in domestic content creation.

We would like to thank the FilmOntario Board members who participated directly on the Panel, as well as the many members and stakeholders who participated in its various sub-committees.

Workforce Development

As the industry grows, we will continue to need to attract new workers in all parts of the province who represent the diverse nature of Ontario’s population. FilmOntario has been working with the Ministers’ Advisory Panel, Ontario Creates and MLTSD to promote the industry as a viable career choice to students and second career trainees. In addition, we continue to advocate that provincial programs that support training initiatives are accessible by the film and television industry, where there is not always a traditional employer / employee relationship. MLTSD’s Skills Development Fund is one program that is accessible to those in our industry.

Earlier this year, the City of Toronto released two workforce studies. The first, [Toronto Screen Industry Workforce Study](#), draws largely on pre-COVID data but provides some valuable insights. It also shows which departments currently face shortages and makes some predictions about where the pressure points will be in the future. [“Breaking In” to Toronto’s Film & TV Production Sector](#) looked at the barriers faced by certain underrepresented groups when seeking employment in the industry. The City of Toronto has begun to develop programs to address the gaps noted by both studies; at FilmOntario we will continue to draw on this information to inform our own advocacy work around more and better training for the industry.

In September of this year, we were pleased to join Mayor Tory for [an announcement](#) of the extension and enhancement of the xoTO training programs. Many of our member unions are also partners in these programs, which seek to extend job opportunities to communities that have not traditionally had access to the industry. Some of the funding for these enhancements came from the province’s Skills Development Fund, a welcome demonstration of the government’s interest in ensuring that our industry has access to provincial training initiatives.



Ontario Green Screen

FilmOntario was proud to be an original partner in [Ontario Green Screen](#), which now includes 20 industry partners as well as Ontario Creates. In 2021, we increased our commitment to become a voting member of the Advisory Committee, and we are actively participating in many of the sub-committees. The Circular Innovation Council was brought on board as program managers in early February, providing operational support to the OGS.



The OGS Strategic Plan, setting out the direction and goals through 2023, was launched in April of this year. These goals are centred around community engagement, educating the industry and providing it with resources and tools to implement sustainable production practices on set, and creating a framework for effective measurement and reporting.

Over the course of the year, OGS has held two community meetings, and launched the [EV/Hybrid Vehicle Pledge](#), which is intended to influence rental car companies to increase their inventory of hybrid and/or electric vehicles by demonstrating a demand for them. Training courses continue to be offered, free of charge, on sustainable production practices and carbon footprint calculation.

In addition, the most recent community meeting provided a demonstration of Second Harvest's [food rescue program](#), including their handy app, which has already been used by several productions to help reduce food waste on set and to give back to the community. This program is available across the province, and we encourage everyone to check it out.

As part of the strategy to provide resources on sustainable practices, OGS will be publishing regular case studies featuring productions of all sizes and their efforts to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions, reduce waste, and overall reduce the negative environmental impact of their shows. We encourage you to check them out for some great ideas of what you can implement on your own shows.

Telling Our Story

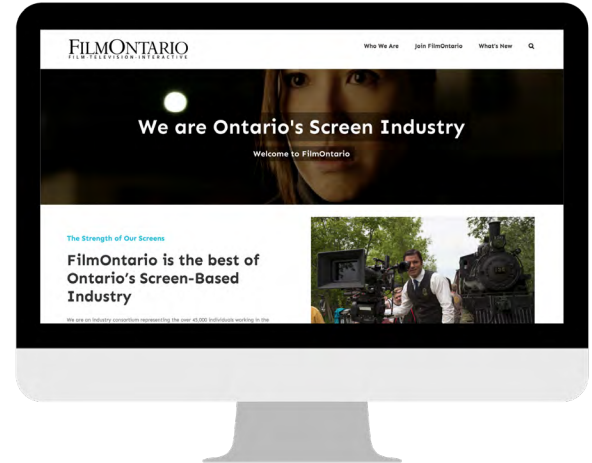
Ontario continues to be one of the best places in the world to make films and television shows. The stories we tell on the screen make the most of the province's talent and world-class locations. But we also need to do a better job of telling our own story – highlighting not just for government but for our friends and neighbours the economic impact of our industry and promoting our own work.

To that end, we will soon be launching a “Filming Is Good Business” campaign through our Twitter account to highlight the wide variety of businesses that benefit from film and TV production. Working with regions and municipalities throughout the province, we will be featuring local businesses and attractions that have been used as a location or that have supplied goods or services to the industry. The business owners will provide some points about the positive impact the industry has made for them, as well as photos and links to their shop or site. This campaign will continue for several months, and will cover as many regions as possible.

The photos and talking points from the social media campaign, supplemented with interviews with business owners, will eventually be compiled into a short video. The goal is to give audiences a better understanding of just how many of their favourite local spots benefit from the business of production. It's not too late to have your favourite supplier or location featured in this campaign. Just get in touch with Cynthia at your earliest convenience.

We are also engaging in a website refresh that will do a better job of highlighting the industry, showcasing our members, and providing a source of information. The new filmontario.ca features a cleaner design and more visuals. We have added a section to spotlight our members, and are committing to updating the information more frequently.

The new site is live now, and in the coming months it will be enhanced with a members-only section and additional industry resources. If you would like to be one of the first to have your organization highlighted, be sure to check out your member update for instructions on how to submit an image so we can start showing you off!



Industry Partnerships and Collaboration

We continue to enjoy successful collaboration on marketing projects and other initiatives with the City of Toronto Film Office and Ontario Creates. We were pleased to join forces with these partners on a successful pitch to Netflix to locate their first Canadian office in the City of Toronto, [announced](#) on April 27. With this office, Netflix is expanding its commitment to working with Canadian talent by building on the success of domestic productions, including *Anne with an E*, *Schitt's Creek* and *Kim's Convenience*, all Canadian stories that have shone on the world stage.

This collaboration continues through weekly meetings and plans are underway for in-person marketing events in the new year. There is definitely pent-up interest in inbound fam tours as well as interest in partnering with the City on a marketing mission to Los Angeles. We will continue to monitor local public health conditions and set these plans in motion when the time is right.

We are also grateful for the continued collaboration with other industry organizations. Sharing data and collaborating with the CMPA and MPA-C has made our advocacy better and helped get results. In addition, we would like to thank the CMPA for their ongoing financial contribution to our government relations activities.

We continue to engage with other levels of government across the province. Cynthia Lynch represents FilmOntario on the Ontario Creates Screen-based Advisory Committee. This Committee meets three times a year to provide input and advice to the Agency regarding their programs and support for the sector. Cynthia also continues to sit on the City of Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Board as well as the Port Lands Flood Protection Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

Finally, we are increasing the outreach we do to other municipalities and regions across the province, including participating in Cultural Industries Ontario North (CION)'s Film Forum during the Sudbury International Film Festival. Municipal staff were also invited to participate in meetings with the Ministry of Labour as part of our work on workforce development. These connections have been especially helpful in collecting information for the Filming is Good Business campaign, and we hope to build on them over the next year.

Thanks to All Our Members

We would like to thank our members for their continued support through what has proven to be another challenging year for the industry. Without your support, we would not be able to continue our advocacy and tell your stories. We hope that 2022 will provide additional opportunities to expand and continue to diversify our membership base, as the industry continues to grow and evolve.

We were very pleased to welcome some new members this year:

- David Mintz Catering
- Directors Guild of Canada – Ontario
- Don Carmody Productions
- First Mile Technologies
- MBSE Canada
- Studio City Toronto

We can't wait until we can gather together in person, to meet new and existing members face-to-face, and to strengthen the bonds forged through the collaboration that makes us a better industry.

Governance

At FilmOntario we are committed to transparency and effective communication around all our decisions. To that end, we are currently completing an extensive review of our internal approvals process, to ensure that we continue to serve the best interests of all our members and the organization in everything we do.

In addition, we will also be undertaking a review of our by-laws in 2022. While precipitated by changes to the *Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* that recently came into effect, it also gives us the opportunity to reflect on, and update where needed, the organization's structure and principles. The results of this review and any changes needed will be presented at next year's AGM.

Board of Directors

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank our extremely engaged and hardworking Board of Directors:

John Weber (Treasurer)
 Take 5 Productions

Jayson Mosek (Secretary)
 NABET 700-M UNIFOR

Paul Bronfman
 Comweb / William F. White

Scott Garvie
 Shaftesbury

Hilary Goldstein
 Buchli Goldstein LLP

Victoria Harding*
 Directors Guild of Canada – Ontario

Alex Lalonde
 Stratagem Rx

Ira Levy
 Breakthrough Entertainment

Wesley Lui
 House of Cool

Angela Mastronardi*
 IATSE 873

Andy Micallef
 EP Canada

Jim Mirkopoulos
 Cinespace Studios

Monty Montgomerie**
 IATSE 873

Len Pendergast
 Global Incentives Inc.

David Rumley
 IATSE 667

Vanessa Steinmetz
 Stone Carver Media

Jane Tattersall
 SIM International

* Subject to confirmation at the 2021 AGM

** Departed Board partway through the year

In particular, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Monty Montgomerie and Sue Milling, who will both be leaving the Board this year.

Monty joined the Board in 2011, and in his ten years with FilmOntario has been a committed labour voice within the organization. His industry expertise and production knowledge have been an invaluable resource in many political meetings, where he could always be counted on to describe the industry's challenges and priorities in a way that made them relatable to whoever was in the meeting. He participated in many of the Board's committees, including Government Relations, and was a key partner in many industry-wide initiatives, including the xoTO training programs which were recently expanded. As he takes up a new position with IATSE's Canadian Office, we wish him well and are happy that he will still be nearby as a resource and friend to FilmOntario.

Sue Milling joined the Board in 2013 and became co-chair in 2015. As co-chair, she has led the organization with grace and good humour. Her strong commitment to consensus-building and maintaining relationships has seen

FilmOntario, and the industry, through some difficult conversations and situations. Throughout her tenure, we have seen strengthened collaboration on dealing with issues related to harassment, discrimination and bullying on set, weathered an unprecedented global pandemic, and secured commitments from the government on tax credit stability. We will miss Sue's presence at our Board meetings, and wish her all the best in her future activities.

Looking Ahead

We are currently working on our submissions to the province in preparation for the March 2022 Provincial Budget. While we support all the Advisory Panel's recommendations, our Budget submission will focus on a few key priorities:

- Continued stability of the film and television tax credits
- Modernization of the tax credits so they are platform-agnostic and competitive with other jurisdictions, including updating the broadcast triggers to include online platforms and allowing location fees as eligible expenditures in the service credit
- Continued and increased support for workforce development activities that provide opportunities across the province and to people from all backgrounds
- Continued investment in domestic content creation, including the continued investment in diversity initiatives provided through Ontario Creates programs

In addition to the continued growth of the industry in 2022, we will also be facing both provincial and municipal elections in the spring and in the fall. We are currently doing outreach to all political parties on the priorities identified above, as well as making the case for increased investment in domestic content creation.

Whoever wins the election, the new government at Queen's Park will be faced with the daunting task of rebuilding Ontario's economy while dealing with a growing provincial debt. As an industry, we need to prepare to defend and fight for the provincial tax credits and continued investment in domestic content creation. The "Filming is Good Business" campaign will help us do that, but we will also be investing in a research study that will focus on the economic benefits and job creation of the industry throughout all regions of the province.

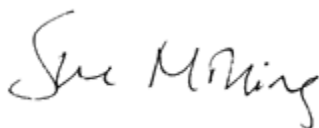
We once again have much to be proud of as we reflect on the past year. But there is always more work to be done as we work together to build a stronger, more sustainable, more inclusive industry. Thank you for all your hard work and collaboration over the past year.

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT OUR MEMBERS

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Jonas



Sue Milling