

REPORT

Community Services

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: May 12, 2025

From: Blair Fryer, Director, Community Services
File: 2658979

Item #: 2025-132

Subject: **2024 Filming Activity**

RECOMMENDATION

1. *THAT the report titled “2024 Filming Activity,” dated May 12, 2025 from the Director, Community Services be received for information.*
 2. *THAT the City’s Filming Policies and Procedures be updated to include specific language related to cancellation notice by adding into section 4.5: “When City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. are required by the filming coordinator and/or the production company; a) City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. are appointed at a minimum four-hour callout. b) when not cancelled with a minimum of 24 hours advanced notice, production is responsible for a four-hour callout fee for City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. at the noted service rate.”*
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the annual overview of filming activity and accomplishments for 2024 and to approve a minor change to the Filming Policies and Procedures document which specifies how the Filming Bylaw and Filming Fees are administered.

SUMMARY

For many years, New Westminster has been a desirable filming location in the Metro Vancouver area, which has resulted in a steady source of annual revenue for the City. In 2024, the motion picture industry was recovering from job action within the industry from multiple unions that lasted until November 2023. It took some time for production offices to get rolling again, which resulted in a slow start in 2024. Film activity did increase through the spring and fall then slowed again at the end of the year. A slow down at the end of the year for the holidays is not atypical.

In addition to a slow start, a number of significantly-sized construction projects were underway in New Westminster that limited the amount of available filming locations. Limited availability of off-street parking locations large enough to accommodate filming trucks, catering, actor trailers, equipment, etc. also presented a challenge. New Westminster has two locations large enough to accommodate the “circus” that is associated with a film crew: the north parking lot in Queens Park and in the Tipperary Park parking lot in conjunction with the north side of Royal Avenue.

BACKGROUND

In 1998, the City started to actively manage filming activity in recognition of the significant benefit of filming as it creates meaningful economic spin-offs (non-film permit revenues) which include indirect spending and supplemental income to residents and merchants. A Film Coordinator position was created to support filming requests, coordinate City services, manage neighbourhood impacts through communication and mitigation efforts with residents and businesses, and apply filming policies and permit fees.

EXISTING POLICY

Film Permit Bylaw No. 7793, 2016, regulates filming activity in New Westminster. Applicable filming permit fees are accounted for in the Parks and Recreation Fees Bylaw No. 6673, 2001. The City has additionally adopted Filming Policies and Procedures that accompany related filming bylaws. In addition, Creative BC’s Filming Code of Conduct, applicable law, and industry standards also govern filming across the province. To date, all filming within New Westminster is managed through the City’s Filming Coordinator.

Revisions:

A minor change to *Filming Policies and Procedures* is recommended to clarify what the requirements are to cancel City staff and NWPD services and the minimum call out time, if the production changes. While the recommended changes reflect the current practice, providing additional clarity is intended to ensure there is no room for misinterpretation.

Section 4.5 of the [Filming Policies and Procedures](#) reads:

4.5 Scope Change – once a filming permit is approved and issued, the Film Coordinator must approve any/all scope changes in writing and may require a) an updated Filming Notification Letter, b) polling, or c) the cancellation of the existing permit and a submission of a new filming application. Scope changes that have not been approved in writing by the Film Coordinator may be subject to fines.

Staff recommend adjusting this item in the Filming Policies and Procedures to read (emphasis added to highlight proposed changes):

*4.5 Scope Change – once a filming permit is approved and issued, the Film Coordinator must approve any/all scope changes in writing and may require a) an updated Filming Notification Letter, b) polling, or c) the cancellation of the existing permit and a submission of a new filming application. Scope changes that have not been approved in writing by the Film Coordinator may be subject to fines. **When City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. are required by the filming coordinator and/or the production company; a) City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. are appointed at a minimum four-hour callout. b) when not cancelled with a minimum of 24 hours advanced notice, production is responsible for a four-hour callout fee for City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. at the noted service rate.***

See Attachment A for the proposed revised *Filming Policies and Procedures*.

DISCUSSION

The Film Office receives a small number of calls or emails from the community regarding filming within the city and the temporary impact it has on businesses and residents; typically less than 10 per year. The Film Office works with the business owners, residents, and the production companies to mitigate and resolve concerns in a timely manner, and employs careful timing in advance to ensure locations are well scouted and impacts are communicated in advance.

Positive impacts and experiences related to filming are frequent but mostly unrecognized by the general public. Examples of unique filming stories that benefitted local residents and organizations in 2024 include:

- **The Wedding Banquet feature film** was issued four film permits for 11 days of filming. The value of those permits was \$45,466, which resulted in a direct spend amount of \$115,000 going directly to local businesses and residents in New Westminster.
- **Final Destination Blood Lines feature film** was issued one film permit for one day of filming. The total permit value was \$41,419, which resulted in a direct

spend of \$113,750 going directly to local businesses and residents in New Westminster.

- **The Last of Us** filmed in City Hall Council Chamber. The production paid approximately \$10,000 to have a new presenter's desk built, designed by City staff, which now provides an opportunity to disconnect and remove the desk for filming or other City functions to maximize the space.
- **Invasion** filmed in the Queens Park neighbourhood and booked the north parking lot in Queens Park for their circus. The Parks department was hosting a tree sale for the community the following day and was concerned they would not have enough time to set up the next morning. The production company's location crew offered to set up hundreds of cones to delineate the parking lot for the tree sale after their work trucks left the area at midnight. Staff organizing the tree sale were very grateful for the collaboration between the Parks department and the Film Office.
- **Tracker** filmed at Happy Moms Café on Twelfth Street and replaced the front windows and made interior improvements for the business.
- **Lexus TV commercial** filmed at Capital City Arcade and paid for updated replacement window art with the business' new branding.
- **Tracker** filmed at 807 Carnarvon Street. While filming, several of their crew members booked to have their car repairs done at Able Auto Body while filming on location for the day.
- **School Spirits** filmed at a residence in the Queens Park neighbourhood on First Street in July. See *Attachment B* noting the residents' positive experience with the production company.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Despite limited access to filming locations due to increased construction in New Westminster, more film permits were issued in 2024 from the previous year.

In 2024, the Film Office received 198 requests to film. 142 did not proceed for a variety of reasons such as the location was not selected by the production, the location was not available during the time frame requested, or the location was restricted due to film frequency or civic projects. The Film Office processed 56 film permits (summarized in Attachment C) that included eight feature films, 28 TV series, ten TV commercials, five independent films, two TV movies and three student productions.

The following table summarizes the past six years of filming in New Westminster.

Year	Permits	Film Days	Permit Value*	Net Operations**
2024	56	78	\$886,897	\$389,702
2023	40	53	\$286,626	\$47,469
2022	64	86	\$1,047,517	\$353,201
2021	60	76	\$593,494	\$173,255
2020	54	76	\$730,886	\$220,966
2019	95	140	\$795,151	\$324,960

*Includes all City services costs and fees associated with issuing a film permit

**Net operations after accounting for all filming operating revenues and expenditures

The average film permit value for 2024 was \$11,300. Permit values will vary based on the scope and scale of the production or locations and services requested. Film permit revenue sources include civic location fees, administration charges, license fees, inspection fees and purchased civic services (i.e. Police, Fire or Electrical Services and Civic Location Liaisons).

Revenue fluctuates annually based on several factors such as the number of productions that come to British Columbia from other parts of Canada, the United States or other parts of the world, productions requesting to use recurring locations for their story line, the ability to accommodate work truck parking within the city, or coordinating filming requests based on frequency of filming in neighbourhoods and working around construction projects.

It is anticipated that in 2025, the Film Office will issue film permits at the same or greater than the number of permits in 2024. Film revenue will support a continued economic benefit to the City, residents and businesses.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

To ensure the Film Bylaw and Policies and Procedures are followed, several departments contribute including Engineering and Parks & Recreation.

OPTIONS

There are three options for Council's consideration:

1. THAT the report titled "2024 Filming Activity," dated May 12, 2025 from the Director, Community Services be received for information.
2. THAT the City's *Filming Policies and Procedures* be updated to include specific language related to cancellation notice by adding into section 4.5: "When City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. are required by the filming coordinator and/or the production company; a) City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. are appointed at a minimum four-hour callout. b) when not cancelled with a minimum of 24 hours advanced notice, production is responsible for a four-hour callout fee for City staff, liaisons, Police, Electrical, Fire, etc. at the noted service rate."
3. THAT staff be provided with other direction.

Staff recommend Option 1 and 2.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Proposed Revised Filming Policies and Procedures

Attachment B: Letter from Resident

Attachment C: 2024 Filming Activity

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Trevor Cave, Filming Coordinator

Jen Arbo, Manager, Community Partnerships

This report was reviewed by:

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Jennifer Miller, A/Deputy Director, Community Services

This report was approved by:

Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer

Blair Fryer, Director, Community Services