

Use of Nathan Phillips, Metro Hall and Yonge Dundas Squares by the Toronto International Film Festival

Date:	April 6, 2009
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager Economic Development Culture and Tourism
Wards:	All
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SUMMARY

Year after year, leading international film festivals around the world establish a City-wide presence that commands local and global attention. Internationally, the Toronto International Film Festival is known simply as “Toronto”. To TIFF the host city is an important part of the fabric of the festival. Filmmakers, journalists, and producers alike praise the unique atmosphere created by our appreciative, savvy, sophisticated audiences.

In 2008 the festival continued to grow with 1,080 screenings on 36 theatre screens, welcoming 3,172 industry delegates and 1,000 members of the international and domestic press. TIFF is interested in building their relationship with the City and working in partnership to showcase the best that Toronto has to offer while the attention of national and international media and film industries is on the City.

For ten days each September all eyes are on Toronto. As the world’s largest public film festival TIFF is recognized around the world as a major hub of industry activity each year. Festival films arrive from over 50 countries and are screened in 50 languages. This year’s festival the 34th runs from September 10-19 inclusive.

Two of the Festival Group’s key goals are to lead the world in building markets and audiences for Canadian works and to build Toronto as a landmark international destination for the moving image. TIFF’s industry services and programming, press delegation, Canadian film programming, international film selections, community support, and economic impact make a great contribution at every Festival.

For this year's festival TIFF would like to establish a larger presence to increase the City-wide public impact of the festival by utilizing Nathan Phillips Square (NPS), Metro Hall Square (MHS), and Yonge-Dundas Square (YDS). This request is not standard. It is believed, however, that the plan has merit. It is fully congruent with and will work towards the advancement of the Council approved Agenda for Prosperity. It is also reflective of the circumstance in which TIFF finds itself this year where its new home is still under construction and the real estate market is not receptive to its request for temporary space. Adoption is recommended and at the same time implementation will need thoughtful decision making, careful monitoring and good tracking of outcomes so that any future requests can be reviewed and evaluated based on experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development Culture and Tourism recommends that:

1. The use by the Toronto International Film Festival of a portion of Nathan Phillips Square from May 25, 2009 to September 21 for one tent and from August 10 to September 21, 2009 for a second be approved.
2. Staff be directed to work with TIFF to implement, to the greatest extent possible, their request.
3. Authority be granted to staff to accommodate the TIFF request for 2009 at Nathan Phillips and Metro Hall Squares including permitting activities outside of the routine as long as the decisions do not compromise public safety or existing agreements with other users.
4. The Municipal Code Chapter 237, "Nathan Phillips Square", be amended to permit the selling of tickets and merchandise on Nathan Phillips Square.
5. The Board and staff of Yonge Dundas Square be requested to consider TIFF as a partner, and not just a client, and make all best efforts to minimize fees and charges.

Financial Impact

If agreements for TIFF's use of Nathan Phillips Square and Metro Hall Square are structured on a cost-recovery basis and within the Yonge Dundas Square Board of Management policy for the use of the Square by charitable organizations, there will be no financial impact to the Operating Budgets of City programs. The application of other terms and conditions for the booking of these spaces could result in 2009 Operating Budget shortfalls for Facilities and Real Estate, Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Yonge Dundas Square.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact statement.

DECISION HISTORY

The Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Division has received a request from the Toronto International Festivals Group to extend the public interface between the Toronto International Film Festival and the public by expanding its activities and presence in Nathan Phillips, Metro Hall and Yonge Dundas Squares. Staff in Facilities and Real Estate; Cultural Services; and Parks Recreation and Forestry have been consulted related to the implications of the request and in the preparation of this report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Municipal Code Chapter 237 “Nathan Phillips Square” prohibits the sale of goods or services except as directly linked to an approved event without the approval of Council. The request is non standard and may generate questions and concerns. Staff, from all affected divisions, have been consulted. Should the project move forward, a working group, made up of staff, will be created to make decisions, monitor implementation, and track outcomes.

COMMENTS

The Toronto International Film Festival is unique among Toronto’s festivals, special events and institutions. It has true international reach. Producers, Directors, actors and distributors from all corners of the globe congregate here - whether from Africa to India, China to Europe, or the United States to South America. It attracts more than 3,000 film industry professionals (including writers, producers, location scouts, sales agents, and buyers) who attend the Festival to conduct the business of film. This gives TIFF the opportunity to showcase the local production and post production facilities. Annually, one thousand reporters and photographers from more than 40 countries file reports daily from the festival and for 10 days each year television feeds provide images of Toronto and remind travellers around the world that our City is the place to be. These reports and images deliver millions of dollars of advertising from which Toronto businesses and workers benefit. The festival generates \$33 million in unpaid media value, with press coverage of the Festival reaching 444 million impressions. In an independent report by Influence Communications in 2007, TIFF was the City’s biggest newsmaker by far, 7.5% of all coverage mentioning Toronto.

The festival has the potential of touching every citizen of the City. In fact more than 400,000 admissions take place, open screenings are held on Yonge Dundas Square, Bell Express Vu cable broadcasts interviews and thousands line-up every day to try and catch a glimpse of their favourite star. The economic impact of the Festival is perhaps the largest of any annual event in the City. The 2008 Economic Impact Study conducted by TCI Management Consultants, Cormex Research, and TNS Canadian Facts report that the Festival contributed approximately \$130 million into Toronto's economy and supports jobs in the entertainment and hospitality sector. The Festival is a not-for profit charity. The merchandise it sells helps it to finance its activities delivering a better and more internationally acclaimed event as well as promoting Toronto as a destination.

Clarification on Principles:

The principles which City Council has adopted with respect to film shoots (Council report entitled "Amalgamation of Film Permitting Services – 200012-038) are well suited to the request being made by TIFF. That policy states the City, with respect to the use of its property and resources, will treat film shoots not as a profit centre but rather apply a cost recovery approach. In this fashion TIFF would not be charged permit fees but rather have to cover any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the City or forgone revenues. This would mean reimbursing the costs for such items as construction, electricity used, staff time associated to maintenance and security, repairs, and damage.

The Toronto International Film Festival Group has identified a desire to build a long term stronger relationship with the City that would reinforce each other's goals. A stronger public presence through a physical presence on the three downtown squares was seen as one step toward implementing this partnership. A tremendous amount of work and consultation has been done related to the evolution and renewal of Nathan Phillips Square. This year, 2009, presents a special set of circumstances for TIFF. Their new home, Bell LightBox, is under construction and not available to them. The downtown real estate market is being unreceptive to providing the arrangements routine for many years. The request before committee comes within this context. TIFF, like any group, is allowed a presence and to conduct its business for a period surrounding the Festival. The nature and extent of an annual larger and longer presence in the downtown public squares needs to be refined as a result of the experience of the summer of 2009 and in the context of decisions related to the new Nathan Phillip's Square.

Staff are directed to work with TIFF to implement, to the greatest extent possible, the request made by TIFF and delegated the authority to accommodate the request including permitting certain activities outside of the existing by-laws as long as the decisions do not compromise public safety or existing agreements with other users.

Impacts:

The establishment of the TIFF presence will introduce a new dynamic on Nathan Phillips and Metro Hall Squares. The tents on NPS will be accommodated on the grassed area between Osgoode Hall and the square itself thereby diminishing any direct impact or

interference with groups already booked on the square. The key event on which there would have been a conflict was the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibit and the two organizations have found a mutually satisfactory and beneficial solution. TIFF activities will draw extra foot traffic generally to NPS and significant line-up on a handful of days. The Festival has years of successful experience managing their line-ups and controlling crowds that gather. The additional traffic is expected to further animate the square.

For the past few years TIFF has had a tent at Metro Hall Square to sell tickets and merchandise. This is proposed to continue. Additionally, TIFF proposes to shift its “red carpet”, media and fan presence from Simcoe Street, where it has encountered challenges, to MHS itself. This will need to be well managed but will as well enhance the viewing experience for fans. Additionally, it will provide additional safety for the public as the location is moved from the street and some relief for the local condominium owners as we will not need to close Simcoe Street.

In 2008, Yonge Dundas Square became a new and exciting extension of the festival and its activities for the Toronto public. During the ten days of TIFF special events, a free concert and movies each night were programmed. Seventeen thousand attended the concert alone, the events overall drew 70,000 and total visits to the square topped 150,000.

For the Fall, TIFF wants to continue and hopefully build on the successes of its inaugural year. In order to make this happen, however, some or all of the fees charged will need to be reinvested in programming and staging. Council, in establishing YDS, has required it to ensure that its budget is revenue neutral and its revenue collected from events such as those proposed by TIFF is how it ensures this obligation. A partnership with TIFF and the sharing of costs could result in a deficit. Given the level of public participation and animation created for our international guests and the press, it would be appropriate to request that the staff and the YDS Board seek all avenues to reduce or where possible eliminate fees and charges.

Permission Required:

The request made by the Toronto International Film Festival can, with one exception, be executed by staff. The presence of a booth for sales unrelated to an event taking place directly on Nathan Phillips Square is in contravention of the NPS by-law. Permission for TIFF to conduct its ticketing and merchandising activities does, therefore, need the approval of Council. The rationale presented above demonstrates the benefit to the City and provides support for Council to make the decision to grant permission.

CONCLUSION

The Toronto International Film Festival is one of an exclusive group of annual events in Toronto's cultural landscape with true global reach. It is also a public event in which tens of thousands of Torontonians can and do participate. For the 2009 festival TIFF is proposing to enlarge its public interface. This will mean some change but with good decision making and monitoring, this expansion of activities into the public realm should prove a success for the City and the public.

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SIGNATURE

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