



## REPORT FOR ACTION

# Spotlight on Toronto: A Strategic Action Plan for the Film, Television and Digital Media Industry

**Date:** May 10, 2017

**To:** Economic Development Committee

**From:** General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

**Wards:** All

## SUMMARY

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This report presents *Spotlight on Toronto*, the Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Board's new strategic action plan for the screen industry, for City Council's consideration.

The film, television and digital media industry has grown to become one of Toronto's key economic drivers, contributing a record-breaking \$2.01 billion to the city's economy in 2016 and supporting an estimated 30,000 jobs. However, Toronto faces increasing competition from other jurisdictions in North America, which have invested heavily in new studio spaces and tax incentive programs to attract and retain new business. The Board's new strategic action plan is designed to empower sector stakeholders to succeed in this highly competitive market.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, recommends that:

1. City Council adopt *Spotlight on Toronto: A Strategic Action Plan for the Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Industry*, enclosed as Attachment 1.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to report to the Economic Development Committee in the first quarter of 2018 with an implementation plan for *Spotlight on Toronto*.
3. City Council direct the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to implement actions in *Spotlight on Toronto* that could commence in 2017.

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

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If *Spotlight on Toronto* is adopted by City Council, the implementation of the plan's recommended actions will be accommodated within the Economic Development and Culture (EDC) Division's budget beginning in 2018, including by re-allocation where required. Where appropriate, EDC will begin to implement actions that can be delivered within its 2017 Approved Operating Budget.

EDC will continue to monitor demand for services from the film, television and digital media industry. Should additional resources be required in response to industry growth, EDC may request them in a future year budget submission.

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

## DECISION HISTORY

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In February 2015, City Council established the terms of reference for the Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Board as an advisory body to City Council.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.EX2.1>

At its June 2016 meeting, City Council adopted a report outlining immediate actions to strengthen the film, television and digital media industry developed following a trade mission to Los Angeles led by Mayor Tory. *Spotlight on Toronto* builds on the five-point plan adopted in this report to develop a longer-term strategic action plan for the growth of the sector.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.ED12.1>

## COMMENTS

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Toronto's film, television and digital media industry is recognized globally for its innovation and creativity. The sector continues to experience significant year-over-year growth, achieving a record-breaking production investment of over \$2 billion in 2016.

Yet, while Toronto's screen sector is growing, competing jurisdictions are doubling their efforts to attract new business. Amid heightened competition and burgeoning growth in cities such as Chicago, Vancouver, and Atlanta, the City and industry partners must do everything they can to maintain Toronto's long-held position as one of the premiere production centres in North America.

Recognizing the need to strengthen Toronto's competitive advantage, the Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Board convened stakeholders for consultation sessions in fall 2016 to establish directions for a new strategic action plan. The Board heard from colleagues representing a wide cross-section of the industry, including directors,

producers, writers, actors, studio operators, film festival organizers, distributors, animators, unions, guilds, educational institutions, and other creative entrepreneurs.

Based on the results of these consultations and building on the five-point plan for the screen industry approved by City Council in June 2016, the Board has recommended a path for growth across five strategic focus areas:

- **Active Advocacy**

*Spotlight on Toronto* calls on the City to assume the role of a leading advocate and champion for the screen industry and encourage all orders of government to adopt policies and programs that support the continued growth of the sector. Recommendations encourage the City and sector partners to advocate for competitive, stable creative industry tax credits and develop policies that respond to new and emerging issues impacting the industry.

- **Strong Fundamentals in Physical Infrastructure and Workforce Development**

Expanded physical and human infrastructure is essential to the continued growth of the screen industry. Recognizing that Toronto's studios are operating at capacity, *Spotlight on Toronto* recommends immediate action to create opportunities for studio development and investment and address demand for location filming. The Board also recommends that the City, industry and education partners create a new workforce development strategy for the screen industry, supporting the development of top-tier talent both on and off camera.

- **Exceptional Customer Service Enhancements**

As the industry grows, Toronto has an opportunity to build its competitive advantage through exceptional customer service. The Board's recommendations include actions to support production clients and improve community outreach and engagement efforts in neighbourhoods across Toronto.

- **Globally-Recognized, Innovative Digital Media Sector**

Digital technology continues to transform the way that screen-based media is made, consumed and imagined. *Spotlight on Toronto's* recommendations leverage the potential of new digital technologies and identify actions that will position Toronto as a leading jurisdiction for digital media innovation and partnerships.

- **Dynamic Branding and Strong International and Business Partnerships**

Toronto's vibrant film scene leads the city's global media profile, contributing to our reputation as one of the best places to live, visit and do business. The Board's recommendations seize opportunities to enhance the city's brand as a leading screen-based production centre and to promote the high-quality domestic and international film, television and digital media products made in Toronto.

In the coming months, staff from the Economic Development and Culture Division will work with the Toronto Film, Television and Digital Media Board to develop an implementation plan for *Spotlight on Toronto*. The plan will identify priorities for implementation based on available resources. It will also include outcomes and performance metrics to measure the success of the plan.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Mike Williams  
General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1: *Spotlight on Toronto* - A Strategic Action Plan for the Film, Television and Digital Media Industry