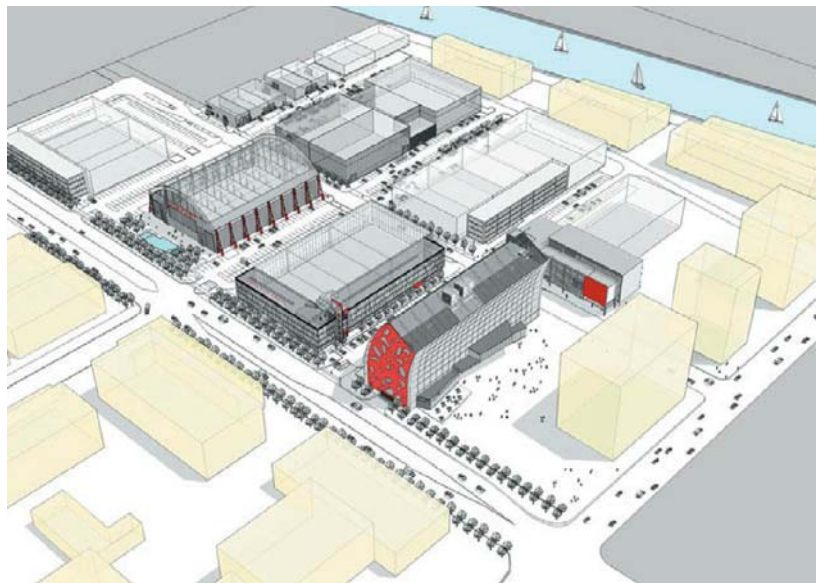


TORONTO'S INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY CLUSTER IS A **WIN-WIN FOR TAXPAYERS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND FILM SECTOR**



By Michael Kraljevic



LIGHTS...CAMERA...ACTION! It's hard to think of three more exciting words in the English language. For thousands of Torontonians in the local film and television production industry, however, those words evoke the reassuring day-to-day challenges of working hard in a good job, and collecting a steady paycheck, rather than exotic, far-away dreams of Hollywood. Film and television production is a big business in Ontario; two years ago, it generated \$1.28 billion for the provincial economy, and accounted for nearly 30,000 full-time, direct and spin-off jobs.

And thanks to some very timely investments made by far-sighted individuals over a decade ago, Toronto is poised to become an *even bigger* entertainment production centre.

If you have explored Toronto just north of the shipping channel, you've seen one of the city's most exciting ongoing projects: the cleanup of old industrial lands, and the emergence of a new

Innovation and Creativity Cluster for film and entertainment production, creative, technology and knowledge-based jobs. The Cluster's main anchor is Pinewood Toronto Studios (formerly known as "Filmport"), a massive complex with more than 250,000 square feet of production space and twelve stages, including North America's largest purpose-built sound stage. I'm proud to say the Toronto Port Lands Company (TPLC) played a key role in the creation of the Cluster, which is already growing – and strengthening – Ontario's film and television industry.

Everyone knows that Toronto has a long history of standing in for large American cities such as Chicago and New York. Toronto was attracting plenty of film and television crews in the 1980s and 90s, but it had a major problem: the city was missing out on many big-budget, "tent-pole" movie productions because it didn't have adequate production facilities.

Toronto needed a large-scale studio if it was going to bring in major motion pictures, especially in an era of a rising Canadian dollar. At the time, TPLC (or TEDCO, as we were known until 2008) owned a large piece of vacant land that used to house an Imperial Oil tank-farm until the mid-1990s. As a self-financing corporation that's owned by the City of Toronto, TPLC/TEDCO could lease the land and reward taxpayers with a financial dividend. A win-win was in the making.

After issuing both a worldwide Request for Expressions of Interest and a Request for Proposals in 2003–2004, the City of Toronto and TEDCO selected a private investment consortium to develop the project. But first, the soil had to be remediated after years of contamination. Following a complete environmental assessment, a site management strategy was developed which involved sending most of the excavated soil a short distance away for bio treatment. By doing so, we avoided a costly, and ecologically unfriendly "dig-and-dump" approach.

Pinewood opened its doors in July, 2008. Phase One of the Filmport project saw the





completion of the studio, and seven stages, including the 45,000 square foot “Megastage.” Three more large soundstages were added in 2013 with the realization of Phase Two, and another 100,000 square feet of office space is contemplated for the future.

“Toronto offers a winning combination of stable and competitive financial incentives, superb talent and skills, diverse locations, and world-class infrastructure which together have allowed us to attract and retain a strong slate of production activity,” says Karen Thorne-Stone, President & CEO, Ontario Media Development Corporation. “The Pinewood Toronto Studio complex is a critical component of that infrastructure and has been a key contributor to the development and stability of our production sector over the long term.

The ability to support a wide range of foreign film and television production with state-of-the-art facilities also ensures the growth of strong

domestic companies that create high-value jobs and anchor the industry in Ontario.”

The Innovation and Creativity Cluster is a perfect example of how the TPLC and other government agencies can partner with the private sector to achieve economic development objectives. Thanks to our actions in the early 2000s, a sizeable piece of Toronto’s waterfront has been environmentally rehabilitated and returned to productive use; the city’s film and television industry has the new and necessary

infrastructure it needs to safeguard jobs and attract major productions; and the City of Toronto enjoys a new source of revenues. It feels good to make a difference. **■**

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