



REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (REDI)

LIGHTS...CAMERA...ACTION! REDI BECKONS THE FILM INDUSTRY

RECENTLY, THERE'S BEEN a concerted effort to make Northwestern Alberta more attractive for film projects—big and small. As a result, the Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) is introducing “A Supporting Role,” a strategy that positions REDI as a one-stop shop for filmmakers interested in obtaining information and resources.

“We’re positioning the North as a filmmaking destination of choice,” said Mackenzie County Councillor and REDI Chair Lisa Wardley. “We have

what many filmmakers are looking for. They just don’t know what’s here yet. We’re working on that.”

REDI’s A Supporting Role campaign invites filmmakers to, “meet the backdrop of your next film project.” The initiative hopes to attract feature-length films, commercial videography for general publication and advertising, television commercials, documentaries, educational films, made-for-television movies and television programs.

With stunning locales and abundant natural beauty,

the REDI Region is an unspoiled canvas with many locations that could be the perfect “small town” setting for upcoming television and motion picture productions.

Fort Vermilion, for example, offers stunning natural vistas complemented by historic buildings that date back to 1788.

“In many cases, filmmakers can take over the town to shoot a scene,” said Wardley. “It’s on my bucket list to help someone shoot either a lost-in-the-wilderness film or an apocalypse movie here.”

The REDI Region is a wealth of incredibly diverse landscapes waiting to be captured by filmmakers.

“We have jaw-dropping sunrises and sunsets, valleys, meadows, farmland, lakes and the list goes on,” said Wardley. “Our climate gives filmmakers four distinct seasons to work with that look vastly different.”

Wardley also points out that at the peak of summer, daylight scenes can be shot for 20 hours straight, and at the peak of winter night-time scenes can be shot at 4pm, so there doesn’t have to be a night crew.



In addition to REDI’s support and the region’s natural attributes, filmmakers can also benefit from government tax credits and assistance from the High Level Film Industry Task Force, which was inspired by a film production shot in the area that wrapped in October of last year.

ALBERTA FILM AND TAX CREDIT

Provincially, there’s been significant growth in the film industry since 2020, when the Alberta Government launched the Alberta Film and Television Tax Credit. It’s a refundable tax credit certificate applicable to eligible Alberta production and labour costs to corporations that produce films, tv series and other eligible screen-based productions in the province.

As of August 2021, Alberta had attracted 50 productions representing nearly \$1 billion in production costs and approximately 9,000 direct and in-direct new jobs. The

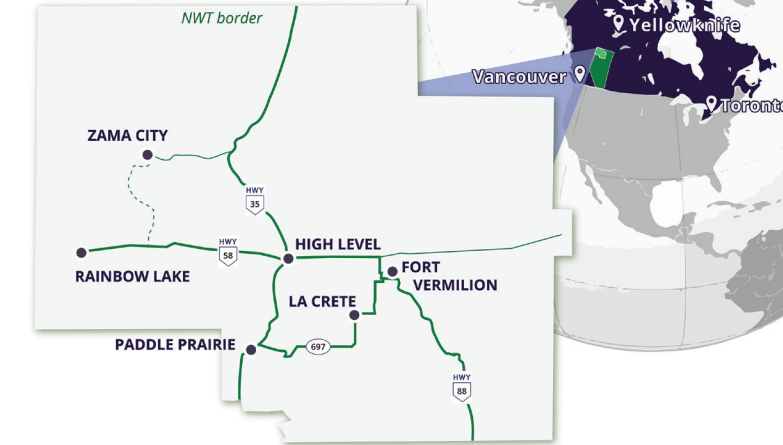
Alberta Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation Doug Schweitzer had this to say:

“Alberta is the new Hollywood. With our stunning landscapes, our immense talent and our world-class studios, our province is being showcased on the big screen in a way that it never has before, with thousands of jobs being created in everything from carpentry to catering,” said Minister Schweitzer.

The budget for the 2021-2022 Film and Television Tax Credit is \$50 million, and eligible projects can apply for a 22% or a 30% tax credit certificate.

UPCOMING FEATURE FILM

Last September, filmmaker Aaron James (Sorensen), originally from Dixonville, filmed the upcoming film *Guitar Lessons* at a number of locations within the REDI Region. Local business owners, governments and members of the general public



came together to make it possible. The film’s release is scheduled for this fall.

“We had no red tape. We filmed in High Level, surrounding First Nations communities, Paddle Prairie and Zama, and they all made everything easy and welcoming for us,” said Sorensen. “When you shoot in the city, red tape is something you normally encounter, but it just wasn’t part of our equation. They invited us up and helped us in every way they could.”

After the production wrapped, the Town of High Level developed a film and TV task force.

TOWN OF HIGH LEVEL’S FILM INDUSTRY TASK FORCE

The Town of High Level recently developed the Film Industry Task Force to review the regulatory requirements, so members of the film industry can easily operate in the municipality.

“The task force was born of necessity. When *Guitar Lessons* was filming in High Level, we flew by the seat of our pants because we didn’t have policies, regulations or administrative guidelines

in place. When a street needed to be shut down or a business—or a Town facility—was needed, we had to make it up as we went,” said Town of High Level Mayor and REDI Board Member Crystal McAteer.

Comprised of local stakeholders, the task force aims to give the municipal government practical recommendations for attracting and supporting the film industry while remaining sensitive to the needs of the community.

According to McAteer, the importance of attracting the film industry is obvious.

“It has a highly positive impact on the local economy. Despite having some of the most naturally beautiful and diverse landscapes, we haven’t provided competitive incentives to attract film production. I believe the film industry is a great leveraging tool to attract tourists to our region too,” said McAteer.

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