



## New studio will significantly increase Hollywood North film capacity

Stuart Derdeyn | September 7, 2019

**A** B.C. studio expansion announced at the Toronto Film Festival Saturday increases Hollywood North film capacity by as much as 15 per cent.

The new 600,000-square-foot facility at Martini Film Studios in Langley's Walnut Grove neighborhood will include 300,000 sq. ft. of purpose-built sound stages and 300,000 sq. ft. of support buildings. The new capacity adds to the existing two million-plus square feet of studio space in Metro Vancouver and marks the first major expansion since Martini Film Studios opened in 2017.

"A lot of what is going on in the industry in general right now is moving toward our province and our city becoming more of a creative hub, rather than a service hub," said CEO Gemma Martini. "The real key to our success here is our stability and how we've grown into what we can do. Great crews, great facilities, great equipment, great locations have all contributed to Vancouver becoming a major hub. And, of course, there is the two-and-a-half-hour travel time to Los Angeles."

Busy from opening day, Martini Film Studios is presently home to productions ranging from Warner Bros/Netflix's Chilling Adventures of Sabrina, TBS's Snowpiercer and Netflix's Another Life. Vancouver Film Commission director David Shephard said the announcement comes at a critical time when the local industry is booming and production shows no signs of slowing down.

"Martini Studios made quite an impact in the initial time that they have been open at their existing studios, and this new property coming online will be a great benefit for Vancouver at a time when this sector needs it," said Shephard. "This continues to be a favored and desired destination for filmmaking and a lot of the production companies are looking at secured spaces and long-term relationships in a proven hub. All we are hearing and seeing from the key streamers and studios out of L.A. is that they are searching, literally, around the globe for places to put that business, and we want that."

According to the most recent research from the Vancouver

Economic Commission, the film industry contributed \$3.8 billion to the local economy in 2018. Since 2012, the research reports \$18.7 billion added to the economy, with \$10.2 billion of that being wages paid to British Columbians. At the moment, the outlook for the industry suggests higher figures for 2019 as an unprecedented global boom in content creation takes place.

"Right now, a key reason that we have the industry we do relative to all the other markets that have really strong tax incentives is that the volume of work being done with all the new Netflix-type projects going on requires the right facilities," said producer Justis Green (The Order, TRON: Legacy). "Someone I know is prepping the largest Disney project to be made next year and he is looking for stage space all over the world, because that is what is needed for these kinds of projects. We benefit greatly here from having all this space that you can count on."

If that purpose-built space isn't there, the productions go to another market. Securing long-term properties such as Arrow, Supernatural and The Flash generates security in the market and is an important part of maintaining a prime position in the present boom.

The Martini Film Studios expansion provides space that can be key to securing a primary share of a production's business. Increasingly, the film/TV and digital entertainment industries are developing facilities outside of pricey downtown environs.

"There is a tax credit line here in Langley which is around six per cent, which is pretty attractive to any production," said Martini. "Warner Brothers, who are so smart, were the first to really start scooping up space in the area, which is perfect for having the option of city, farm, mountain and forest locations only minutes away and not hard to get to from downtown."

At the moment, Supergirl, Riverdale and The 100 are all located in Langley. Creative B.C.'s In Production list for Aug. 30 listed 55 projects shooting, or about to shoot, in B.C. A total of 169 shows were made in the province in 2018. ■