

***Sustainable Film and
Television Production in
Newfoundland and
Labrador***
A Baseline Review



econext

Accelerating Clean Growth
Newfoundland & Labrador

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Reported By:

econext

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econext looks forward to working with all stakeholders in this vibrant and exciting sector in pursuit of a wide range of objectives in the clean and green spheres.

Executive Summary

The Film and Television Production industry in Newfoundland and Labrador has grown to \$87.3 Million dollars in annual production activity. As sector activity grows through domestically- and internationally-sourced production, the imperative to pursue a more environmentally sustainable industry increases to meet the expectations of funders and service production clients.

Over the course of 12 months, *econext* undertook a sector review supported by producer interviews, set visits, and other conversations with industry suppliers. Through this sector review, *econext* was able to gain an understanding of how the industry as a whole performs when it comes to energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emissions, and waste diversion. While bearing in mind the unique characteristics of the industry, and understanding the spectrum of production where everything from small-scale, short film to well-established, multi-season, episodic television exists, *econext* has been able to provide some suggestions for the sector to pursue as its stakeholders seek to become more environmentally sustainable. The highlights of these suggestions include:

1. Reducing the prevalence of single-use items and diverting organic waste
2. Identifying a rental car supplier who can provide greater access to hybrid- and electric-powered vehicles
3. Working with property owners to identify ways to increase energy efficiency and build a case that it benefits both the lessee and the lessor; and
4. Identifying stakeholders to engage in the pursuit of decarbonized power generation options, and working towards lowering emissions when powering base camps and on-location filming

The following report explores in detail *econext*'s findings and recommendations to the film and television production industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Introduction

Film and Television production in Newfoundland and Labrador is a growing industry. At the end of FY 1998-99, production activity totalled approximately \$7.65 Million; at the end of 2024-25, total production activity had reached \$87.3 Million. A strong creative culture and tradition of engaging storytelling permeates the industry and drives domestic productions that appear on the silver screen and on the platforms of Canadian media companies such as CBC, Global, and CTV. The province's breathtaking vistas and wide-ranging landscapes attract international media companies, driving service production. Production ranges from small independent films and shorts, to weekly episodic television shows, to limited series supported by streaming platforms like Netflix, AppleTV, and Disney+. The ecosystem is supported by long-running festivals including the St. John's Women's International Film Festival and the Nickel Independent Film Festival.

The pursuit of a green and sustainable film and television industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is influenced by several factors. Firstly, recipient requirements for sustainability plans and reporting on emissions has become standard among national funders such as Telefilm Canada and CBC. Secondly, a more sustainable local industry is a competitive advantage when competing for service production against other similar jurisdictions in the international market such as Ireland, Iceland, and Great Britain; and when up against nearer competitors like Nova Scotia. Reaching a more sustainable industry matches the NL market with the sustainability benchmarks found in mature locations including Vancouver and Toronto. Finally, production companies in the industry are inherently focused on the bottom line; going green represents an opportunity to reduce costs over the life of a production and positively impact profit.

econext was approached by Picture NL in January 2024 to assist in providing content to the inaugural Sustainable Production Forum scheduled for April 12, 2024. This event was organized in collaboration with the Green Spark Group and brought local industry stakeholders together with suppliers in the green sector, and provided training in carbon calculations. This was the first contact our organization had with the film and TV industry. Recognizing the bottom-line focus of the sector, *econext* curated a panel discussion regarding opportunities for financing, funding and de-risking the green projects of production companies and suppliers, bringing together speakers from *econext*, Newfoundland Power, and the Provincial Government's Department of Industry, Energy and Technology.

Participation in the first event dealing with sustainability in local film and television production opened doors for *econext* to connect with industry, and bring our expertise in sustainability, waste diversion, emissions reduction, and energy efficiency. The work

econext has taken on in collaboration with Newfoundland and Labrador's film and television industry is important for several reasons:

- Long-term cost savings for the business that operate in the industry
- Developing a competitive film and television industry that can attract service production and drive domestic and international investment
- Lessening impact of the industry on emissions, resource/energy consumption, and waste
- Gaining the trust of the public in our province that film and television is a sustainable industry that has positive economic and environmental impacts if/when production comes to their region
- Matching industry standards and expectations for sustainability in other jurisdictions

About *econext*

econext is a not-for-profit association with a mission to accelerate clean growth in Newfoundland and Labrador through a focus in three areas of activity: innovation, workforce, and net zero.

econext's vision is for Newfoundland and Labrador to be recognized as a significant contributor to global decarbonization while achieving net zero domestically by the year 2050.

econext was first created as the Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association (NEIA) in 1992. It has focused on creating business opportunities as a means of solving environmental problems that not only create economic growth but also protect the environment at the same time. It has worked on behalf of its membership to increase public awareness of and a call to action on environmental issues, such as climate change, waste management, and air and water pollution.

With an increasing urgency in the global fight against climate change, concepts like 'green economy', 'clean technology', 'decarbonization', 'net zero', and 'clean growth' were becoming more commonplace. In 2021 NEIA rebranded as *econext* to reflect its evolving and increasing role acting as a catalyst for environmentally sustainable economic activity in Newfoundland and Labrador.

econext has been working for over 30 years on behalf of its members across many sectors to support environmentally sustainable economic development. With a current membership of over 150 businesses, research institutions, governments, and

organizations – *econext* is Newfoundland and Labrador’s leading voice on the green economy.

Film & TV Industry Engagement – planning and first steps

Following the Sustainable Production Forum in April 2024, our first engagements with PictureNL helped us take stock after the first forum, planning out next steps, and how to best form relationships to positively impact this objective for the industry. Working collaboratively with PictureNL benefits *econext* through facilitating opportunities to engage with production companies and independent filmmakers. Through this engagement *econext* was able to tour production companies, talk with directors, and meet with union leaders to understand the current status of sustainability issues on set and identify barriers to greater sustainability implementation. Information gathered during set visits is summarized in the **Sector Activity Scan**. These one-to-one interactions were very valuable in providing greater understanding of

- the linkages between production budgets and the capacity to implement sustainable practices;
- the difficulties in finding any and all services to support production on-location in rural areas, let alone services in the green/environmental sector;
- the delegation of responsibilities amongst crew and production staff; and
- The supply chains for power generation and transportation in the sector, existing relationships, and the breadth of what’s required to operate production

In exchange, stakeholders including producers and suppliers were able to avail of *econext*’s expertise as it pertained to planning for sustainable productions; understanding funding programs that can influence greener operations; assistance in compiling funding applications and connecting with funders; and facilitating business to business connections to provide greater flexibility in suppliers.

Sector Activity Scan – In-Depth Discussions and On-Site Visits

Part I – What we were looking for

econext has a deep understanding of green concepts in energy efficiency, emissions reduction, and waste diversion, however, we had no experience with what happens

on-set. Prior to engaging with our contacts from PictureNL, we devised a list of scoping questions to help us assess the current state of sustainability initiatives

1. How much and what types of waste are produced?
 - a. Organic waste generated through meals and snacks
 - b. Prevalence of single use items for food service; beverage containers;
 - c. Related collection, diversion, and disposal functions of the above
 - d. Sets – how much winds up as construction materials waste? Are sets repurposed?
 - e. Props and Costumes – was there any reuse or repurposing of the items? Where did they end up when they had reached their end of life?
 - f. Electronics and A/V Waste – computers, printers, cables, monitors, specialized technology
2. How many vehicles were involved in production, what type of activity were they involved in, and were there any special considerations during production?
3. What sources of energy are being used in powering productions? What are the energy needs of productions? How are those needs being met when on-set and when on-location?
4. How are energy efficiency principles applied at locations of activity – sets, offices, storage? How practical is it to use more energy efficient lighting in filming?

Part II (a) – What we heard and what we saw

From May 2024 through March 2025, *econext* set out to observe activities and interact with the industry. Discussions took place with producers, suppliers, crew members, union reps, industry professionals, and supporting organizations with a variety of engagement tactics. These included one-on-one discussions, set visits, funding proposal supports, and business-to-business connections.

The engagement period was very helpful in grounding our organization's understanding of the sector's challenges in being more sustainable. From a high-level perspective, some of the more interesting things *econext* found included:

1. The structure of the businesses in NL's film production is quite different to other sectors we've worked with towards sustainability/emissions reductions objectives. The relationship between the umbrella production company (e.g. ABC Productions Ltd.) and the corporation that gets set up for each production (e.g. The Goat Movie Inc.; Police Cops Season 1 Ltd.) is a first for us. This project-to-project, season-to-season churn can be a challenge when trying to identify long-term solutions for sustainability.
2. Most production companies do not own technology, vehicles, and solutions to waste diversion; local and out-of-province rentals are the primary source for the tools and mechanisms needed to complete a production. This can be a challenge for both the production companies and their suppliers in approaching funding partners.
3. The ability to engage in sustainable filming practices varies from production to production; feature films and shorter, lower-budget pieces tend to have less flexibility when it comes to their bottom line which impacts decarbonization of power sources and transport, and diversion of waste. More mature production companies who have greater access to resources have the luxury of maintaining old sets, props, and costumes.
4. Crew training on sustainable practices would be a boost to the efforts of increasing sustainability in film and TV workplaces; producers hold the responsibility for planning and reporting but putting these plans into action require understanding and buy-in from crew.

Part II (b) – What We Saw: Going Deeper

There is a wide range of sustainable practices in NL's film and TV production sector. In the previous section we established why sustainable practices can be difficult to standardize across the sector. This section will take some of the specific items in Part I and evaluate the sector's approach to each.

Waste: A film set can be thought of as a small community. Beyond the set location itself, there are stations for food and beverage, cast lodgings, workspaces for the crew, dressing rooms, and storage spaces. Depending upon the set, there were some

sustainable practices in place, but location, resources and capacity determined how developed these practices were. Key examples include:

- Set-piece waste was not an issue for any of the production companies that were engaged in longer-term production such as TV; there was plenty of repurposing and reusing of construction materials
- The same could be said about TV productions and the management of props and costumes. Part of this success can be attributed to continuity in filming, but it is also attributable to the way staff in these departments think. Items are logged, stored, and kept in meticulous shape for quite some time. Prop masters are happy to share and loan items to others in the industry, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills. For costumes, repairs and alterations are made-in house, and items are used until they no longer can be put onto the set. Any wardrobe items that have reached the end of their useful life are donated to various used clothing stores across the Northeast Avalon region.
- Single-use items (plates, cutlery, water bottles) are an area where there was a range of approaches based on capacity and resources:
 - For some companies it was important for their catering providers to utilize reusable plates and cutlery. There was a recognition that washing/sanitizing dishes does add layers to the catering function, but still worth the effort to reduce the amount of waste produced.
 - The use of single-use plastics like water bottles varied depending on production. One of the production companies we observed were proactive in providing reusable water bottles for all staff and crew and placing water filling stations strategically throughout the workspace. Other productions continue to purchase bottled water for staff. One of the reasons given for the continued use of bottled water was ease of access for crew when shooting. One of the common examples brought up were camera operators and the need for them to be in place for long periods.
 - The biggest caveat on single-use items is that once filming goes on location, it becomes significantly harder to reduce their usage. So much goes into maximizing the time on-location to get the needed shots that some functions of production need to be simplified. When shooting outdoors, particularly in rural or remote areas of the province, single-use items become necessary to keep things moving along as smoothly as possible. Location Managers play a valuable role in

ensuring that waste and recycling are handled properly when on-location, employing the pack-in, pack-out mantra.

- The amount of organic waste that is inherent to productions due to craft services and on-site meals represents an opportunity to divert a significant portion of total waste created by productions. As service providers in the pickup of compostable materials continue to mature in Newfoundland and Labrador, and availability of the service becomes more consistent, they can become another vendor or supplier in the supply chain for film and television. Furthermore, existing technology permits a safer, less odorous containment for organics on sites, which is explored in detail later in this report.

Vehicle Usage: The significant amount of vehicle use is a key component of the total carbon emissions for productions. The range of uses for vehicles for film and TV production is quite wide. Some of this is obvious to any commercial operation – the movement of supplies, technology, power sources, from one site to another by way of small- to medium-duty commercial vehicles; the use of smaller passenger vehicles for short range trips so staff can collect supplies, mail, food, and get from home base (like a set or an office) to an off-site filming location.

Other uses are a little bit less obvious: multi-passenger vehicles like vans are spaces for on-screen talent to warm up or cool down after shooting an outdoor scene. The May to Early-December cycle of filming in our province experiences the full gamut of temperatures and weather patterns. For on-screen talent to perform to the best of their ability and to avoid delays for makeup and hair touch ups, vehicles dedicated to on-screen talent sit nearby idling to maintain temperatures inside. It is a necessary, but fuel-intensive function on-set.

The standard industry practice of rentals also applies to vehicle usage. Commercial vehicles are supplied through long-standing arrangements with local car rental companies (primarily Enterprise) and film-specific rental providers. Car rental companies also supply vans for set use and passenger vehicles for short range travel.

Decarbonizing vehicle usage in the provincial film and TV sector will have a great impact on the industry's green and sustainable profile. While going electric could be one of the solutions, the charging networks across the province aren't as developed as other jurisdictions. Time is money during production, and a dead battery in an electric vehicle would be a major issue whether on-set or on the road. Hybrid vehicles may be a potential short-term solution as charging networks continue to develop and enter more public spaces. The one downside is that currently hybrid vehicles are not as ubiquitous within the fleets of car rental companies as traditional gasoline-powered vehicles. *econext* reached out to the three main car rental shops in St. John's to ask what kind of

demand would spur them to update fleets with more hybrid vehicles; responses were received from one of the three (Budget), whose representative indicated their willingness to work with industry to identify needs and align supply to meet those needs.

Energy Sources: Filming locations need significant amounts of energy to operate, requiring power for equipment such as cameras, lighting, microphones and sound tech, monitors and more. Power is also required for base camp, an expansive area where equipment, trailers for cast and crew (like hair, makeup, and wardrobe), catering and craft are located. Base camp is essentially a centralized staging area that supports the filming location, often separate from the actual shooting area. How base camp operates can be fluid depending on filming location, but no matter where it is, it requires power.

Powering film productions primarily lands on existing electrical grids for sets located in rented buildings, while base camps and on-location filming is powered primarily by external power sources, mostly generators using gasoline or diesel. In the first case, production companies utilizing the electricity grid in Newfoundland and Labrador can be rest assured that over 90% of the grid is powered by renewable sources, primarily hydroelectric power. In other jurisdictions such as Ontario, power drops have been installed by power distributors and the Municipalities at popular filming locations to reduce the usage of gasoline- or diesel-powered generators in urban areas, positively impacting noise levels and fuel exhaust pollution. While this might be a more longer-term objective, there still represents an opportunity to work with the power distributors to identify locations around St. John's where small scale power drops are present.

External sources of power continue to evolve to support industries and sectors in all areas of the economy. The development of electric generators and other Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) continues forward, and these systems can be sourced from local companies. The first sustainable production forum in April 2024 resulted in a piece of new tech for energy sourcing being loaned to the CNA Film School and put into use by industry. Reviews of the specific electric battery source were mixed: the reduction in exhaust fumes and related emissions was counter balanced by such issues as its internal heating system requiring up to 25% of the batteries life to operate, reducing operational time; any lapses in workflow whereby the system was not recharged at end of the day rendered it inoperable; and its bulk precluded its practical applications for on-location shooting.

The utilization of hybrid technology for external power sources was noted by industry professionals as a potential avenue that is more practical and can be used easily on-location in comparison to larger BESS units. The cost of such units, approximately CAD \$70 000, represents a significant investment both for businesses in the local

supply chain and more established firms on a national level. Without a significant incentive for production companies to utilize such a piece of equipment, there is a concern that bottom-line considerations for producers will continue to push them towards existing diesel-powered generators. Where this incentive comes from could be from pressure from the sustainability requirements from funders, investors, and the companies seeking service production; or it could be more of a carrot in the form of tax credits, funding opportunities, and financing for suppliers or end users. Creative approaches to funding proposals that leverage existing organizations and the resources and capacity at the College of the North Atlantic could be alternative paths to acquiring a piece of technology that reduces carbon emissions and is accessible to as many productions as possible.

Energy Efficiency: commercial customers in Newfoundland and Labrador are continuously seeking to reduce their power usage and can find many supports through efficiency programs (takeCHARGE) and funding from the provincial government. Given that the majority of sets and production company offices are in leased commercial spaces, implementing large scale efficiency gains is unlikely. Ownership of the spaces would make it much easier to implement energy efficiency strategies; purchase the materials, products and services that increase efficiency; and monitor energy usage in concert with partners like takeCHARGE.

Energy efficiency in shooting is not limited to just the lighting in the building. Numerous pieces of lighting equipment can be found on set. We asked professionals in the field how LED lighting would affect their ability to consistently get the shots needed for the production. While LEDs are used for some lighting arrays, there are certain shots where the quality does not match that of an incandescent bulb. Tech and equipment may prove to be a space where inroads may be a bit harder to come by when it comes to sustainability.

Possible Solutions, Next Steps, and the Importance of Collaboration

There is great potential for stakeholders to make film and television production in Newfoundland and Labrador more sustainable. This section outlines possible initiatives, solutions and programming that can help to reduce emissions, divert waste, achieve greater energy efficiency, and position the sector for success.

Funding Programs and different approaches to applications: Appendix A of this report provides a thorough list of potential funding, financing, tax credit and rebate programs that companies in Newfoundland and Labrador can avail of, sourced from multiple levels of government, ABCs, NGOs, and the private sector. While many of the

programs can be beneficial to individual businesses, there are a couple of ways to derisk some of the more costly aspects of the transition to cleaner and greener tech. One opportunity to consider is the identification of avenues for those in film and television production, and its supply chain, to coalesce and coordinate around shared goals that lead to a more sustainable sector. Collaborative, industry-led project proposals wind up with greater access to grants and funding as opposed to financing.

Larger projects that are proposed by industry-led groups fall under a non-commercial funding stream for the likes of ACOA and IET, leading to more non-repayable funding for industry and sector development. What they rank highly when it comes to industry proposals is cooperation, collaboration, and industry buy-in backed up with a cash investment. As initiatives around energy sources can be costly investments in terms of equipment, training, and specialized technical assistance, this may be a beneficial way to have industry work together as partners and derisk the transition.

Existing organizations like ASCO, DGC, and IATSE Local 709 also have a part to play, if their capacities to engage with funders (outside of Picture NL) can be increased or supported. As a relatively new *econext* member, IATSE Local 709 has access to these types of supports from the staff across the spectrum of *econext*'s focus areas.

Industry Collaboration with Education Institutions: The addition of the Paul L. Pope Centre for Film to the College of the North Atlantic's infrastructure was a milestone for film and television industry growth. This focused space for developing film makers and training the workforce has great potential to expand the sector and support larger productions. In addition, the College has added staff dedicated to integrating sustainability and the green economy of the future to its programming and industry outreach. This includes a Dean of Sustainable Development, and staff at the Centre for Applied Research focused on the film industry.

Other supports under Applied Research, including their Technology Access Centre, work with industry to provide access to equipment and technology, and train students on operation, maintenance and technical aspects of the equipment. Industry stakeholders would be well-placed to continue dialogue with the College to determine how sustainability objectives, industry outreach, and applied research can be aligned, and brainstorm beneficial collaborations with tangible impacts for industry. *econext* is happy to support these discussions among the stakeholders here as a catalyst, broker of knowledge and connections or advisor.

The biggest item on the wish list for industry when it comes to sectoral development and applied research, is leveraging CNA's resources and capacities to access hybrid

powered energy sources that can seamlessly switch between electric power with battery storage, and a diesel/gasoline engine that provides power while charging the electric battery. The supply chain and the end users both want to explore this possibility and support from the College is one of the ways it could come to fruition.

Supplier Relationships and low-emissions vehicles: As discussed above, rentals for hybrid vehicles in the province are quite difficult to come by. There are a couple of avenues to make headway in this area. Film and Television is not the only industry seeking a higher proportion of low emissions vehicles in the locally available rental fleet. Joining forces with organizations seeking this same outcome such as Hospitality NL and Destination St. John's creates a greater mass of industry seeking sustainability and greener choices within their supply chains. There are likely other stakeholders to bring in that drive support and can facilitate conversations.

Anecdotally, *econext* learned that one supplier for rental vehicles in St. John's has been the preferred vendor for the sector and has developed strong relationships. For production companies seeking to be as green as possible there will come the time to choose between using the lowest emissions vehicle available regardless of supplier or honoring a long-standing relationship and settling for whatever can be made available. Additional dialogues with the suppliers would be of great value, and *econext* is happy to continue to engage on this item on behalf of the sector.

Industry-driven diversion of organics waste: The sector performs quite well on reuse. Greater gains are to be found in the realm of organic waste. There is no provincial strategy on organic waste reduction and commercial entities are on their own to find practical solutions. New collection services have begun to emerge as there is growing recognition of the economic value that comes from valorizing waste. As these services continue to mature, there are options for organizations to ease a requirement for waste management into work flows.

Knowledge Mobilization

The findings of this report were presented to attendees of the 2nd Sustainable Production Forum hosted by PictureNL on April 11, 2025. The presentation slides are included as Appendix B of this report.

**APPENDIX A - Funding, Financing, Tax Credit and Rebate Programs for
Sustainability and Green Business Growth**



**Resource Kit – Sustainable Film and Television Production Day
April 11, 2025 @ Paul L. Pope Centre for TV & Film**

1. [Business Navigator Program](#) – Cross Department Guidance
 - a. Contact: Jeff Lawlor, Dept. of IET – jefflawlor@gov.nl.ca
2. [Business Growth Program](#) – Department of IET
 - a. Contacts: Paul Thistle, Manager of Business Growth – PaulRThistle@gov.nl.ca
Patrick Foran, Economic Development Officer – PatrickForan@gov.nl.ca
3. [takeCHARGE](#) Commercial Program staff e-mail: bep@takechargenl.ca
4. [Green Transition Fund – Dept of IET](#) – greening supply chains
 - a. Contact: GTF@gov.nl.ca
5. [Climate Change Challenge Fund](#) – Department of Environment and Climate Change
 - a. Contact: Terry McNeill, Manager – TerryMcNeil@gov.nl.ca
6. [Green Technology Tax Credit](#) – Gov NL Dept. of Finance
7. [MMSB – Solid Waste Management Innovation Fund](#) – rolling application acceptance
 - a. Contact: Justin Lee, Programs Officer: jlee@mmsb.nl.ca
8. [NLCU Small Business Loan Guarantee Program](#) – loan amounts guaranteed up to 75%
 - a. Contact: Kent Farrell, Director – Credit – kfarrell@nlcu.com

9. CBDC/Metro Business Opportunities Financing and Funding Programs:

a. Companies in St. John's/Mount Pearl: <https://www.mbobusiness.ca/>

b. Companies Based outside St. John's/Mount Pearl:
<https://www.cbdc.ca/en/find-my-cbdc/nl>

10. BDC Local Contacts:

a. Brandon Randell: Brandon.Randell@bdc.ca

b. Shandi Caines: Shandi.Caines@bdc.ca

11. [econext](#) contacts:

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