

# Film tax break helps Massachusetts go Hollywood

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Massachusetts has made moviemakers offers they couldn't refuse.

In the past two years, one major motion picture after another has been shot in the Bay State - seven films have wrapped up production so far this year - and the list of the glamorous who have come to work here includes Leonardo DiCaprio, Martin Scorsese, Bruce Willis and Sandra Bullock.

The bonanza has resulted from an expansion of the state film tax credit, and, while Boston has most often been the location for filming, this year moviemakers have moved outside the city to Beverly, Gloucester, Rockport, Woburn, Lowell, Worcester and other communities.

"It's slowly but surely pushing out," said Nicholas A. Paleologos, executive director of the Massachusetts Film Office.

So far, Western Massachusetts has not been tapped, though Paleologos said there are great locations in the region and a company could stretch its dollar even further by shooting in the Pioneer Valley.

"The cost of doing business in Springfield is much more attractive than it is in Boston for most of the year," Paleologos said.

In the 1990s, Western Massachusetts had its moments, including the filming of "The Cider House Rules," "A Civil Action," "In Dreams" and "Malice."

"We do have wonderful settings for movies, depending on what they're shooting, and we've done things over the years," said Allan W. Blair, president and chief executive officer of the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts.

Now the question is whether the future will bring a more steady stream of filmmakers to the region.

Paleologos said Gov. Deval L. Patrick caused a frenzy in July when he signed a bill enhancing the film credit, which essentially gives a filmmaker 25 cents credit for every dollar spent on a film, with no cap on spending. Prior to that the cap was \$7 million per project.

Nearly \$400 million has been spent on movie production in the state so far this year, and Paleologos said by the end of July there will have been 14 major pictures shot in the state over the previous year, the most ever in a 12-month period.

In addition, Patrick's press secretary, Kyle J. Sullivan, said the governor will be in Hollywood next week to meet with movie executives "to discuss the continued expansion" of the movie industry in Massachusetts.

Paleologos said in years past the typical movie shot in the Bay State had a direct tie to the commonwealth, such as "The Perfect Storm" or "Mystic River." Now the enhanced credit can make it appealing to create another part of the world here.

As an example, Paleologos points to "The Proposal," starring Sandra Bullock which is set in Alaska but was actually filmed in Beverly and Gloucester because the filmmakers were satisfied they could get "the look that they were going for" in the Bay State.

Still, Paleologos said the script will always be crucial.

"First and foremost, it's going to be the creative decision .Â».Â». Do you have what the script is looking for?" he said.

Blair said the council is following the progress of a proposal in Plymouth to build a production facility, which would include sound studios, and exploring whether something similar could be done in Western Massachusetts. Such a facility would be a way for the moviemaking business to have a permanent presence in the region because it is difficult, Blair said, to "brand" Western Massachusetts as a place where a moviemaker would always feel the need to return. Think John Ford and the Monument Valley.

Blair also said the fact that New York City, home to many actors and other film professionals, is nearby could make Western Massachusetts appealing in the future.

"There may be unique opportunities for us, just by virtue of proximity," Blair said.