

Getting to Know the TPLC- Sim Digital: Lights, Camera Action!



While Toronto has long been known as “Hollywood North,” only in recent years has it been able to attract big-budget, “tent-pole” movie projects, thanks in large part to the Filmport project, and the development of the Port Lands Innovation and Creativity Cluster. The Information and Cultural sector was the largest sector in TPLC’s 2015 Employment Survey, and many believe that sector will only get stronger in the years ahead.

One company that has played a key role in the explosive growth of Canada’s film and television scene is the SIM Group – and especially its powerhouse, SIM Digital – both of which have certainly grown with the times. Founded in Toronto as SIM Video by Rob and Peggy Sim (Rob is still President and CEO of the Sim Group, and both sit on the firm’s board), the company now employs 500 people, including 200 in Toronto and about 60 in the Port Lands. SIM Video officially became SIM Digital in 2012, a few years after its merger with Bling Digital.

Much of the company’s success can be traced to two fundamentals: staying abreast of the latest technological changes, and providing clients with excellent customer service. In Toronto, SIM Digital has worked on Murdoch Mysteries, Pacific Rim, Suits, and the most recent Degrassi series. Worldwide, SIM has helped create Game of Thrones, Arrow, The Flash and World of Warcraft.

From humble beginnings as a video equipment rental establishment, the SIM Group now offers a variety of services such as cameras, post-production, and lighting and grip, and it operates in several North American cities, including Toronto, Vancouver, Sudbury, Los Angeles, Atlanta and New York. The company is still Toronto-based – its headquarters are a 33,000 square foot facility in Liberty Village – although its lighting and grip division, as well as post-production can be found at 80 Commissioners Street in the Port Lands.

John DeBoer, the Chief Operating Officer of SIM Digital, believes the company’s presence in the Port Lands adds a great deal to its bottom line. “The closer you are to your clients, it’s always better,” says DeBoer. “Service, speed and quality all go up in a company when you are close in proximity to your clients.”

DeBoer believes the TPLC has played an important role in bringing film and television jobs to Toronto. “As SIM Group has grown and diversified, we’ve benefitted from the consistent support of TPLC,” adds DeBoer. “As an agent for economic growth and job creation, TPLC has had a particularly big impact on our industry, motion picture and television production. It has helped foster a thriving community that is a great place for creative people to work.”

Asked for an industry forecast for the year ahead, DeBoer is definitely on the optimistic side. The short-term outlook for Toronto’s film and television production is “very rosy,” he thinks, partly because the currently-low Canadian dollar will attract out-of-town producers, but mostly because Toronto is now home to cutting edge technology and top-notch production facilities.