

Calgary

HBO's The Last of Us adaptation to shoot in Calgary area, starring Mandalorian, Game of Thrones actors

Post-apocalyptic series based on acclaimed video games will star Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey

[Joel Dryden](#) · CBC News · Posted: Mar 30, 2021 12:16 PM MT | Last Updated: March 30



A scene from the critically acclaimed video game *The Last of Us*, which is set in a post-apocalyptic world and focuses on Joel, a hardened survivor hired to smuggle teenager Ellie out of an 'oppressive quarantine zone.' An HBO television adaptation of the video games is set to begin shooting in the Calgary area this July. (Naughty Dog/Sony Computer Entertainment America/Associated Press)

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HBO's adaptation of the hit video game series *The Last of Us* will begin production in Calgary this July, according to the Director's Guild of Canada.

The guild lists *The Last of Us* — which will star Pedro Pascal of *The Mandalorian* and Bella Ramsey of *Game of Thrones* — as starting production in the province on July 5, and wrapping up on June 8, 2022.

Calgary's union for film and stage technicians, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE 212), also lists the series as being scheduled for production this July.

Craig Mazin, who created HBO's acclaimed *Chernobyl* series, is set to write and executive produce the series along with Neil Druckmann, who directed the video game series.

The Last of Us takes place in a post-apocalyptic world 20 years after modern civilization has been destroyed.

'Brutal, heartbreaking journey'

According to HBO, the story focuses on Joel, a hardened survivor, who is hired to smuggle 14-year-old Ellie out of an "oppressive quarantine zone."

What starts as a small job transforms into a "brutal, heartbreaking journey" as they traverse the U.S. and depend on each other for survival, the network said in a release.

Pedro Pascal, who played Oberyn Martell on the HBO series *Game of Thrones* and headlines the Disney Plus show *The Mandalorian*, will star as Joel. Bella Ramsey, who played Lyanna Mormont on *Game of Thrones*, will star as Ellie.





The Last of Us will star Pedro Pascal, shown here playing Oberyn Martell on the HBO series Game of Thrones. He also headlines The Mandalorian, a Disney Plus show. (HBO Canada)

Representatives for HBO didn't respond to requests for comment, but rumours of a massive production have been swirling in Calgary for months.

Alberta premier weighs in

During a Facebook livestream held Wednesday, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney hinted at a "very exciting announcement" coming this week.

"[It] will be the largest ever, I believe, film or television production in Canadian history," Kenney said.

In a statement, the press secretary for Jobs, Economy and Innovation Minister Doug Schweitzer said Alberta is on track for "a record year in film" with new privately funded studios in the process of being built to meet demand.

"We welcome any and all productions that would come here, particularly large-scale series from major studios that create thousands of jobs and showcase our scenic vistas and breathtaking sights on a global scale," Justin Brattinga said in an email.

Games critically acclaimed

The original *The Last of Us* video game was released in 2013 to critical acclaim. The game has sold more than 20 million copies as of October 2019, becoming one of the highest-selling PlayStation 3 video games of all time.

The series will "enhance" the events of the original game, Mazin said in [an interview with BBC Radio](#), adding that he is treating the two video games essentially as novels.

"I can't say much about it other than to say, the one anxiety that I think fans of something have is, when the property gets licensed to someone else, those people don't really understand it or are going to change it or make it stupid," he said.

"But in this case, I'm doing it with the guy who did it," Mazin continued. "So the changes that we're making are designed to fill things out and expand. Not to undo, but rather to expand."



Bella Ramsey, who played Lyanna Mormont on *Game of Thrones*, is set to play Ellie, the character shown here in a screenshot from *The Last of Us Part 2*. (Naughty Dog/Sony Computer Entertainment America)

Mazin said the series has become "a dream come true" for him because he's a fan of the series himself.

"I'm a little scared, because everybody's emotions connected to this game are rather intense," he said.

Productions shooting in Calgary

Alberta's film industry has been prepping for a booming year as major U.S. studios [have looked north](#) due to COVID-19 slowdowns.

Damian Petti, local president of IATSE 212, previously told CBC News that certain tax credits are making Alberta a more enticing location to shoot as well.

Last week, Schweitzer also announced that the province would remove a cap that limited film and television productions to a maximum \$10-million tax credit claim in a bid [to draw larger projects to the province](#).

"We're starting to see continued momentum in this field," he said at a news conference.

- [Here are all the Alberta locations in the Ghostbusters: Afterlife trailer](#)
- [Josh Brolin to star in Outer Range TV show which will film in Calgary this year](#)

Upcoming series shooting in the Calgary area include:

- The series *Guilty Party* with Kate Beckinsale.
- A *Fraggle Rock* reboot.
- Another season of CBC's *Heartland*.

Since 2000, the Calgary area has succeeded in attracting several big budget productions to film in the area. In 2013, when *Interstellar* and the first season of the FX series *Fargo* filmed in the area, the total value of the industry reached \$274 million.

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