



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Hiring a CGI Studio in **Canada**

Why half your images should be winter, what a French deliverable actually requires, and the context-model question that decides the cost of every later phase.

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Half the year, the real site is not green

Most rendered Canadian projects are presented in permanent late spring: full canopy, dry pavement, warm low-angle sun. For a large part of the year that is not the building anyone will see, and a council, a neighbour or a buyer who lives on that street knows it immediately.

This is not a plea for miserable images. It is a product argument. A building that works in winter is a better building, and showing that it works in winter is a differentiator that almost nobody bothers to use.

What a summer-only set hides

- Whether the entrance is sheltered when it matters
- What the north facade does with low winter sun
- Where snow is cleared to, and where it piles
- How the landscape reads with the leaves gone
- That the lobby glows at four in the afternoon

What a winter image proves

- The massing, honestly — bare trees hide nothing
- The entry sequence in the condition people complain about
- Warmth, which is the strongest thing an interior can sell
- That the practice thought about the actual climate

Bare trees are also the honest test. A scheme that needs full summer canopy to look acceptable has a massing problem, not a planting problem.

Ask any studio you shortlist for a winter exterior in their portfolio. It is a quick and reliable filter: snow is difficult to do well, and a studio that has never done it will show you summer and change the subject.

STEP 01

Which season, for which image

Decide this per image, not per project. The table is a starting position, not a rule — but do not let it default to summer by accident.

IMAGE	DEFAULT SEASON	WHY
Planning or council submission	Winter	Bare trees show the true massing and the real view impact. A summer image invites the question of what it is hiding.
Street-level context	Winter or shoulder	Snowbanks, cleared paths and salt are what the street actually looks like for months. Neighbours recognise it.
Marketing hero	Shoulder season	Autumn colour or early spring carries warmth without pretending the site is Mediterranean.
Interiors	Winter, at dusk	The strongest interior argument in this climate is warm light against a cold window. Deliberately the opposite of a summer interior.
Amenity and landscape	Summer	The one place a full-canopy image is honest, because that is when the space is used that way.
Aerial or masterplan	Both	Cheap as a pair once the scene exists, and the comparison is often the most persuasive thing in the pack.

Snow is a craft, and it goes wrong in predictable places

01	Snow that has never been walked on	Real snow is cleared, tracked, piled at the kerb, grey at the road edge. Pristine snow everywhere reads as a texture, not as weather.
02	Roofs and ledges	Snow sits where it can and slides where it cannot. Depth on a flat roof, nothing on a steep metal one, a line on every horizontal edge.
03	Sun height	A winter sun is low all day. Long shadows at noon are correct here and look like an error to a studio used to another latitude.
04	Daylight hours	Dusk in January is not dusk in July. If the image is a five o'clock scene, it is a night scene for much of the year.
05	Bare tree species	A leafless tree still has a species and a silhouette. Generic bare branches are as obvious as generic palms would be.

STEP 02

Bilingual deliverables, planned from the start

For a project in Québec, and for federal or bilingual audiences elsewhere, French material may be needed for the municipality, for buyers, or for both. The costly version of this is discovering it after the images are flattened.

Questions for your own advisers — we do not answer these

Language obligations vary by jurisdiction, by document type and over time, and nothing here is a statement of what applies to you. Put these in writing to your legal adviser and to the municipality concerned, before production:

- Which submission documents must be in French, and to what standard of translation
- Whether text appearing inside an image counts as part of the document
- Whether signage or wayfinding depicted in a render is treated as marketing material
- What applies to a sales brochure or a portal listing as distinct from a submission
- Who is accountable for the accuracy of a translation, and how it is to be recorded

What to specify so the answer is cheap either way

Keep language out of the pixels

No baked-in titles, no rendered street names, no labelled room tags. Everything textual sits in a layer above a text-free plate, so a second language is a typesetting job rather than a re-render. Ask for the plate explicitly; it is rarely supplied unless requested.

Decide about signage in frame

Shopfronts, building identity, statutory notices. Either render them as neutral shapes, or produce both language versions of the elements that carry text. Agree which, in the brief, and name who supplies the wording.

One practical trap

French runs longer than English — commonly by a noticeable margin on the same sentence. A caption block, a legend or a board layout that fits exactly in English will overflow in French. Lay out for the longer language first and the shorter one always fits. This is a layout decision made at the start, or a redesign made twice.

STEP 03

Distance, and the question that governs every later phase

A studio in Toronto is no closer to a site in Kelowna than a studio in Europe is. Once nobody is visiting the site, the only thing that matters is how the site information gets to the people modelling it — and who keeps the result.

Site information, when nobody is going

- Who photographs the site, and to a written specification — position, height, lens, conditions
- Which survey, point cloud or aerial data exists, and who converts it
- Who confirms the neighbouring buildings are current, not three years old
- Who pays for a reshoot if the light or the season is wrong

The reusable context model

On a multi-building or phased site, the surroundings are built once and then either reused for years or rebuilt every phase at full price. Ask at the quoting stage: is the context model a deliverable, who stores it, what does it cost to update for phase two, and may another studio continue it. The answer changes the total cost of the site more than any per-image rate.

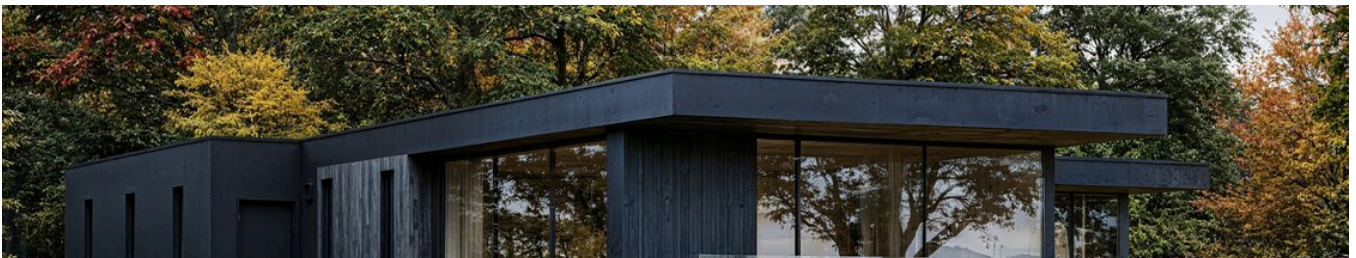
An animation that used to take roughly a week to render can come back in minutes through a real-time engine. On a phased site that is the difference between one flythrough per project and one per season.

DIM KUZMENKO, FOUNDER, MAVERICK FRAME STUDIO

Worth knowing when you plan a multi-phase site: once the context and the buildings exist as one scene, seasonal and phase variants stop being separate commissions and start being exports.

PHASED SITE — ASK AT QUOTING STAGE

- Context model a named deliverable? _____
- Who stores it between phases? _____
- Cost to update context for phase 2? _____
- May another studio continue it? _____
- Seasonal variants from the same scene? _____
- Both official languages planned for? _____



Maverick Frame production render.

WORKING WITH A STUDIO

Cost, and how to brief it

Two things people ask us before anything else. Both answers are short.

COMMISSIONED WORK	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 – 300	\$250 – 600
Single interior still	\$120 – 350	\$300 – 700
Package, 5–8 views	\$600 – 1,500	\$1,500 – 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 – 3,000	\$3,000 – 8,000

Market ranges we are willing to publish. Turnaround and revision-round figures are deliberately not in this table: ours vary too much by project type to state as a benchmark, and an invented number here would be worse than none.

How to brief it — shorter is better

This is the opposite of what most people assume. Four things:

- What you need — **how many images, and of what**
- The plans and elevations, as they are
- A few reference images for mood and light
- One clear line on what the images are *for*

Inflating a small job into a fifty-page specification backfires: taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work. Tell them the intent and let the team that does this daily handle the detail.

The mistake that costs the most

The biggest failure we see is not choosing the wrong vendor. It is **timing**. People start looking only after the first supplier has already failed and the deadline is on fire, then choose in a panic.

Line up and vet rendering partners **before** you need one. One, ideally a few, briefed and ready to take work. It costs an afternoon now and saves a project later.

10+

YEARS RENDERING
VISUAL STORYTELLING

350+

BRANDS & AGENCIES
EMPOWERED GLOBALLY

95%

CLIENT
SATISFACTION RATE

40%+

OF OUR COMMISSIONS NOW
INCLUDE MOTION OR 360

When the image has to hold up, **talk to us**

We are a CGI studio: architectural and product rendering, 3D modelling, animation, 360 tours and VR. Ten years, 350+ brands and agencies, and the kind of work that still looks right when somebody counts the windows.

Send us the plans and a line on what the images are for. You get a scope and a price, and no obligation to use either.

START HERE

maverickframe.com/contacts

SEE THE WORK

maverickframe.com/gallery

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Maverick Frame production render. · Cost ranges are market ranges as of 2026 and are not a quotation.