

Daniel Abboud.

Newmarket, ON. L3Y 1K7

August 18, 2020

London City Council

300 Dufferin Ave, London, ON N6B 1Z2

For the public agenda regarding a Film Officer:

Dear mayor and Council Members,

My name is Daniel Abboud, a 22-year veteran of the Canadian film industry and a proud born and bred Londoner. During my time as a film maker, I have had the privilege of working in several different cities in Canada and in the US. My one major regret is that I have NEVER been able to apply my craft in the city where I grew up, London, Ontario.

Currently, the film industry is seeing seismic shifts because of the COVID19 pandemic.

Production around the world had been halted for almost five full months and are only now starting to come back with pandemic protocols in place. What has been quite clear about the restart of this industry is the severe impact the pandemic has had on the film business in the US. I have attended several meetings of my union local, IATSE local 667, during the past four months and what has been stressed to us in each of these meetings is that it will be EXTREMELY busy once the business ramps back up. Comments from our local's President, Business Agent and International IATSE Vice President have all indicated the desire of US productions to shoot in Canada because of how rampant Covid19 is in the US and how well we have been able to reduce the pandemic's presence. Evidence of how little is being shot in the US can be seen in the area of soap operas and game shows. These are areas where turnaround from production to air is quite quick. Currently US networks are showing vintage episodes to fill the void created by the production shutdown.

During these past five months film and television production has been halted but creating and writing has continued unabated. Competition between streaming services continues to grow as they are shooting more and more of their own original content. This means that there is a huge backlog of content that is ready to be produced. Right now, all they need is a place to shoot it. London, Ontario can easily be one of those places and I ENTHUSIASTICALLY support Councilor Van Holst's motion for the formation of a Film Office in London to foster the establishment of a London as a filming centre in Canada.

During normal times, Toronto ends up turning away productions because there just is not enough studio space. Much of that production either goes back to the US or goes to Hamilton,

Ottawa, or cities in Northern Ontario. Except for Hamilton, Ottawa and the Northern cities are quite far away from the services they need in Toronto. In the case of Hamilton, accessing those services is often hobbled by terrible traffic on the QEW and highway 403. In London's case, with the recent widening of the 401 at key congestion points, productions shooting in London could have much easier and closer access than other shows that shooting outside of the GTHA. If the high-speed rail link gets approved, those links to services in Toronto would become that much stronger.

London has so much to gain by attracting film production. Aside from the direct benefits of employment and direct business between productions and local businesses, the film industry typically brings a **seven-fold** multiplier effect to any city where it shoots. That would represent a great deal of money injected into our local economy.

London has so much to offer the film industry! We have:

- Fresh locations that have never appeared on screen
- Many different 'looks' that can be easily leveraged to tell any story under the sun
- Within an hour's drive, access to Urban, suburban, rural, forested and water locations
- Top notch hotels, restaurants and caterers, equipment rental, and many more services, all ready to do business with the film industry
- Film students from both Fanshawe College and Western eager for real world experience

What is needed next is a way to spread the gospel about filming in London. This is where a Film Office is crucial. A properly funded Film Office in London will actively go out and attract productions to our city. In the beginning productions will not come looking for us, so we will have to go after them. As the film industry grows in London, word will get out as to how welcoming and accommodating a city London is to film productions. As the film industry evolves in London, larger and larger productions will seek us out, even the video game industry could begin using the facilities that would establish in London and grow the local tech sector. All we need to do is to take that step of establishing a Film Office so that London can be actively promoted as a prime destination for film production.

In my 22 years as a filmmaker, I have not seen an opportunity like this present itself and we must act quickly to make the most out of it. I fully support Councilor Van Holst's motion for the formation of a Film Office in London and hope we can act on it soon.

Sincerely,



Daniel Abboud.

Member IATSE 667, Associate member Canadian Society of Cinematographers