

August 23, 2020

Dear Mayor and London City Councillors:

Re: 2020 Interim Budget Amendment Request – Film Office

It gives me great pleasure to endorse Councillor Michael van Holst's proposed motion to establish a film office in the City of London Ontario. I have long believed in London's potential as a Film and Television production hub, and as an administrator overseeing multiple post-secondary programs related to these industries, it is important to me to see our graduates have local opportunities to work and develop their craft rather than travelling to Toronto.

I have been involved in discussions with the City and the LEDC over the past two years regarding the economic impact a thriving production industry can have on London, and the need for a film officer to work with the City and producers to sell the benefits of coming to London, and ensure that the City and local business community are prepared to accommodate the unique needs of talent and crew when they arrive.

In previous meetings and communications, I have described the enormous growth of production driven by the appetite of streaming services, and the resulting increase in spending happening in Canada. I have also described the shortage of space in Toronto that has resulted in Ontario losing business to BC. All of this was pre-COVID.

As much as the timing was already excellent for London to enter the market in 2019, there is now an even greater opportunity. COVID caused production to shut down completely, and while protocols have been put in place and some production has resumed, the full impact is yet to be felt. In April of this year, the Stratagem Group, a major production company in Toronto, reported that 35 billion dollars' worth of production had been deferred globally due to COVID and that streaming was up 85%, driving even more demand for content.

There will be a vast post-COVID surge that will quickly outstrip the capacity of Toronto and other major production centres. Producers will be looking for alternative locations that are affordable and have the resources needed for efficient production. London is a city that is both big enough to provide the accommodation and entertainment needs of a large production crew and small enough that it is easy to get around. The city has a great mix of potential shooting locations, representing a variety of venues and eras.

I have reviewed the 2020 Interim Budget Amendment Request, and believe that it accurately captures the relevant data supporting the need for a film office in London, as well as the main considerations around attracting production and ensuring industry needs are met. The budget of \$300,000 matches my own estimate for a starting budget sufficient to cover the personnel and operating costs for such an office in a city the size of London.

Fanshawe College has been working closely with the Stratagem Group to ensure our graduates are ready to enter the industry and work on set day one after graduation. Fanshawe College is one of only a few colleges where Advanced Filmmaking students receive set protocol training from IATSE and receive their permit as part of the curriculum. Fanshawe students also participated in an internship with Stratagem earlier this year, working with the City and the LEDC to build a database to help attract producers and build up local production.

We are always thrilled to see our students succeed, many of whom have gone to Toronto and other large centres to find work. It's exciting to see their names show up in the credits of the Star Wars and Marvel franchises, but we always hear from them that they would prefer to stay and work in London. The time is right, and possibly critical, for London to move forward and put itself on the map as the excellent Film and Television production centre it can be. We stand ready to help, and look forward to the next steps in this initiative.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Carver', with a long, sweeping underline.

Rob Carver
Associate Dean – School of Contemporary Media
Fanshawe College