

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON NOVEMBER 3, 2020
FROM:	SCOTT STAFFORD MANAGING DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION
SUBJECT:	LONDON'S FILM AND MULTI-MEDIA STRATEGY UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Parks and Recreation, the following actions **BE TAKEN**:

- a) This report **BE RECEIVED** for information; and,
- b) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to submit a business case as part of the 2021 Annual Budget Update process to support the implementation of the Film and Multi-Media strategic objectives as outlined in this report.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- London's Cultural Prosperity Plan, (March, 2013)
- City of London Strategic Plan 2015 - 2019, (March, 2015)
- London's Community Economic Road Map, (November, 2015)
- The City of London Special Events Manual Annual Review, (March, 2017)
- Growing London's Film and Multi-Media Industry, (May, 2017)
- Strategic Plan for the City of London 2019 – 2023, (April, 2019)
- London's Film and Multi-Media Update, (August, 2019)

BACKGROUND

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CITY OF LONDON 2019 – 2023

The Vision in the Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 is for London to be a leader in commerce, culture and innovation – our region's connection to the World.

The Strategic Area of Focus *“Growing our Economy”* has an outcome of *“London is a leader in Ontario for attracting new jobs and investments”*, which includes the strategy, *“Work with multi-sector stakeholders to develop a Screen-Based Industry Strategy”*.

CURRENT FILM AND MULTI-MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Film and multi-media is recognized as an economic driver for the cultural sector, bringing direct employment opportunities to communities through industry specific jobs in the cultural sector. Film and multi-media also creates compound spending through spin-off industries in the hospitality and service sectors (restaurants, hotels, retail, caterers, transportation, and stylists) and contributes to a community's brand, vibrancy and quality of life.

Ontario is home to Canada's largest film, multi-media and television sector. These industries include many components at all stages of audiovisual content production and the delivery value chain. Film, multi-media and TV production in Ontario is mainly made up of small to medium sized companies, and has shown considerable growth in recent years.



The following statistical information has been provided by Ontario Creates www.ontariocreates.ca:

- In 2019, the Ontario film and television industry generated 44,540 full-time equivalent (FTE) direct and spin-off jobs, a 20.4% increase from the 37,000 FTEs generated in 2018.
- Statistics Canada's most recent data (2017) reports that \$0.9 billion was spent by the Ontario motion picture and video production industry on salaries, wages, commissions and benefits, up substantially from the \$0.75 billion spent in 2015. This 2017 figure accounts for 33.9% of the national employment expenditure.
- In the 2018/19 fiscal year, the Canadian screen sector value chain created just over 270,000 FTEs, generating almost \$16.2 billion in labour income and \$23.7 billion in GDP between direct and spin-off impacts.
- A total of 343 film and television projects were produced in Ontario in 2019, up from 324 in 2018 and 323 in 2017. Of those 343 projects in 2019, 261 were domestic, and 82 were foreign. This is an increase of approximately 13.5% in domestic productions and a decline of 12.8% in foreign productions from the 2018 statistics. Domestic production in 2019 was almost 50% of the spend value in the year.
- Combined, these 343 Ontario-produced domestic and foreign projects contributed over \$2.15 billion to the economy. This marks a 14.5% increase from 2018, and a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.3% over the last five years.

CITY OF LONDON MANDATE FOR FILM AND MULTI-MEDIA

The City of London, and more specifically, Parks and Recreation has a mandate to permit filming on public property (owned by City of London). The process of permitting is governed and directed by both Special Event Council Policies and Filming Production Guidelines, which is part of the Special Event Administrative Procedures Manual. These established policies and procedures are in place to protect film producers, City employees and assets from accidental injury, loss or damage.

These policies and procedures provide information for those seeking to produce a film in London about street closures, filming on city property, resident notification, parking permits, the use of helicopters, and more.

The City of London annually funds community film and multi-media organizations through the Community Arts Investment Program (CAIP) which is administered by the Culture Office through a Purchase of Service Multi-Year Agreement with the London Arts Council.

RECAP OF FILM AND MULTI-MEDIA AND CITY COUNCIL

On August 13, 2019, civic administration brought forward an update report to respond to previous council direction from 2017. This report outlined three (3) phases of work (chart below), with two (2) phases to be undertaken in 2020, noting that the second phase was contingent on budget approval for one-time funding of \$75,000. City Council subsequently approved the business case to support this work as part of the Multi-Year Budget (MYB) process.

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Phase 1 – 2019/2020: Review and Optimize Film Permitting Processes and Procedures

- Undertake a review of the City of London’s Special Event Council Policies and Film and Television Production Guidelines. This would include:
 - Developing a new/modified process for film permitting with the goal of improving timelines for approvals;
 - Reducing/removing fees for film permits;
 - Consulting with the local Film and Multi-Media Industry about the design and implementation of proposed new processes;
 - Improving data collection to better understand demand of the industry; and,
 - Working with an internal City staff working group to better understand by-law and zoning barriers to film productions.
- Report back to Committee and Council on findings and recommendations.

Phase 2 - 2020: Development of a Film and Multi-Media Industry Strategy

Upon approval of 2020 business case:

- Continue to work with Service Partner Committee to develop a Film and Multi-Media Industry Strategy and nurture a supportive environment.
- Facilitate further consultation with the local Film and Multi-Media Industry about their needs related to the Priority Themes captured above in this report.
- Measure Film and Television Industry demand.
- Work with post-secondary educational partners to develop the workforce infrastructure that will increase attraction and retention of local talent to London.
- Continue to participate in Ontario Creates professional development and learning opportunities.
- Report back to Committee and Council.

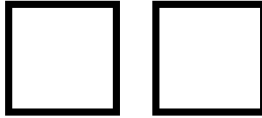
Phase 3 – 2021: Implement Film and Multi-Media Strategy

Upon approval of 2021 business case:

- Recommend Film and Multi-Media Industry Implementation Plan for the Strategy.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE ABOVE PHASES

It should be noted that all of the above phases, and the associated work included in each, has been impacted by COVID-19. The main impact is on timing, as work has not progressed at the pace that was originally intended when presented in 2019.



Phase 1:

- An Internal Working Group with all partners who are involved, or must be notified when filming requests come into our community, was formed at the end of 2019 to map and review current processes and identify barriers to film productions. Future work may include automated work flows, policy and/or by-law frameworks, and continued process refinement and data collection.
- A new fee structure was introduced to reduce fees for film permits through the Multi-Year Budget (MYB) process.
- Continued discussions and participation in on-going film and television working groups with other municipalities to better understand current best practices.
- Partnerships with London Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) and Tourism London to better triage film requests and the showcasing of potential film locations in London.
- Partnerships with the City Studio Program and Huron University College’s 3rd year Business Government Relations Course during the winter of 2021 to understand the current economic impact and benefits (including the value of spending, spin-off benefits and jobs created) of the film and multimedia landscape in London.

Phase 1 is well underway and this work will continue throughout 2021 independent of any decisions made on future phases as we have heard from the industry that processes and fees require improvement. Working with internal groups and the broader industry sector on the above has been complicated and delayed by COVID-19.

Phase 2:

- Secured \$75,000 in one-time funding as part of the budget process to support the hiring of a consultant to develop a Film and Multi-Media Strategy for London.

This funding was approved in February 2020. The intent of this funding was to have a consultant continue to work with Ontario Creates and the local Film and Multi-Media Industry to create and refine strategies under the ‘Priority Themes’ already identified in the August 2019 Council Report:

- Concierge Service
- Locations Database
- Marketing and Promotion
- Specialized Services
- Workforce Development (Talent, Networking and Mentorship)
- Education
- Jobs and Business Development
- Pro Equipment
- Distribution
- Infrastructure
- Investment Funding and Advocacy

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the film sector and many planned activities and outreach of the City of London to a halt. As priorities shifted, and organizational focus had to be realigned with circumstances, administration was unable to go to the market to obtain a vendor to carry out engagement, research and strategy development. Therefore, this work is currently incomplete.

It should be noted that many local service partners, despite the delay in strategy development, have begun implementing and exploring opportunities that support the above priority themes. A few examples provided by London’s Economic Development Corporation include:

- Building a database of London locations that can be used to market London to scouts and producers, as well as creating a repository of drone footage and photography of London’s landscapes for marketing purposes.



- Building a network of referral sources such as Ontario Creates, International Film Association, and the Forest City Film Festival in order to develop leads and generate interest in creating film and television content in London.

POTENTIAL MOVE FORWARD PLANS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Should City Council wish to increase focus on film and multi-media as a priority in a COVID-19 economic recovery context, civic administration wanted to provide some options for consideration, noting that planned work has been delayed on strategy development, and waiting for an implementation plan as part of the 2022 budget update process may not be ideal from a timing perspective.

Despite the delay in strategy development, civic administration has learned a lot from previous sector engagements, work with other jurisdictions, multiple conversations with the Film Commissioner of Ontario Creates, and an in-depth review of other jurisdictional strategies. Some of these learnings were included in the August 2019 Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) report.

The below strategic objectives are directly related to recommendation b) as presented at the beginning of this report. If the recommendation is approved by City Council, civic administration in collaboration with service partners, will create a business case to fund these deliverables. Not all of the below strategic objectives will require a financial ask as part of that business case and some of the deliverables may be implemented by service partners (i.e. LEDC, Tourism London, London Arts Council, etc.).

Strategic Objectives

1) Funding and Advocacy:

- There are federal and provincial location tax credits and incentives, and union Greater Toronto Area (GTA) travel boundaries that provide greater financial advantage to specific geographic regions of Ontario such as the GTA and Northern Ontario. A summary of these tax credits and incentives is available on the Ontario Creates Website page entitled “Introducing Six Great Reasons to Film in Ontario”
<https://digitallibrary.ontariocreates.ca/DigitalLibrary/FinancialIncentives.aspx>
- Over the past few months, there has been a letter writing campaign from the Mayors of Southwestern Ontario (MOSO) to equalize these financial credits and incentives.
- Continue to explore financial programs that could be undertaken locally to support sector growth and provide a competitive advantage.

2) Marketing and Promotion:

- Develop a communications strategy that includes marketing and promotion of London for Film and Multi-Media.
- Connect with Film/Digital Media outlets to build a network to help promote productions locally.
- Develop and promote provincial and local Industry statistics, and Return on Investment (ROI) for London.
- Work with hospitality organizations to put together film packages for the productions while they are in London (i.e. hotels, restaurants, gyms, etc.).
- Develop and promote a specific London film location database with official location approvals that links to the Ontario Creates Locations Database.

3) Attraction:

- Build stronger relationships with key influencers and enablers in this sector.
- Work with Ontario Creates and invite their Location Scouts to tour potential London film locations.
- Create partnerships with supporting organizations and suppliers.

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- Outreach beyond London and potentially partner with Production Studios and companies who provide specialized services (equipment, distribution, infrastructure, etc.).
- Attend national, provincial and local film events and forums to build networks and share opportunities for London.

4) Local Growth and Retention:

- Support existing companies and professionals working in film, television and multi- media.
- Grow the local infrastructure ecosystem required for film, television and media.
- Create a London film service and products business directory and mapping from local companies (electricians, carpenters, caterers, etc.) that could link to the Ontario Creates Production Guide.

5) Workforce Development (Talent, Networking and Mentorship)

- Work with Ontario Creates and respective union groups to develop and incubate talent that is qualified to work in the film and multi-media industry.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to source talent.
- Work with film and multi-media industry to determine what talents are currently in the London community.
- Create a London post-secondary film and multi-media alumni network from Fanshawe, OIART and Western to connect those working in industry.

All of the above strategic objectives are external facing and the goal of enhancing customer experience will continue to be the goal of all internal processes and procedures related to permitting film requests in London. Our current resourcing for film permitting is appropriate for the current demand. A major increase in demand, and/or shift in mandate, may cause civic administration to seek out additional resources to support the operational aspects involved in facilitating productions (i.e. road closures, neighbourhood outreach, policy/by-law reviews, enforcement, etc.).

CONCLUSION

This report is intended to provide City Council with an update on the status of civic administration’s work to date on the development of London’s Film and Multi-Media Strategy and to provide some potential strategic objectives for Council to consider. The strategic objectives identified will become the central components of a business case to be forwarded to the future 2021 budget deliberations.

It was important to provide an update as the timing of some previously directed work on this file has been impacted due to COVID-19 and the urgency of the item may be important to discuss under the lens of economic recovery.

PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
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