

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

**READY FOR
ACTION!**





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43 REPORT PARTICIPANTS & CONTRIBUTORS

Writer: Craig Thompson

Research: Ariane Parlour-Grice

Consulting Editor: Vernon Freedlander

Graphic Design: Sara Herron-Bennett

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SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO READY FOR ACTION!

BACKGROUND

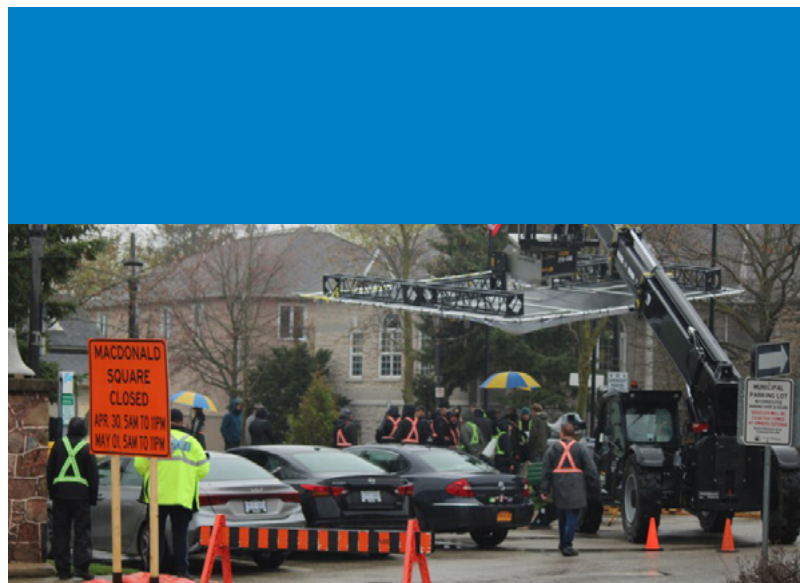
Southwestern Ontario: Ready for Action! received funding support from RTO4 and the Ontario Creates Business Intelligence Program. The purpose of this report was to investigate the potential for expanding the film and television industry into regions of Ontario beyond the current key production markets of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas and Northern Ontario.

Since the release in 2021 of its White Paper "[Reconnecting Ontarians](#): Re-emerging as a Global Leader: An action plan for economic and social recovery through Ontario's Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries", the Ontario Government has been reviewing opportunities and studying strategies for removing regional inequities in the film and television industry.

In that White Paper, it was acknowledged that: Eastern and Southwestern Ontario are presently underrepresented in film production. The Ministry will work with the sector to develop a strategy to identify film-friendly locations, build incentives for production and develop talent. Creating enhanced opportunities for regional production will support a greater diversity of stories and creative talent and help create film and television industry jobs and investment in these regions. It would also facilitate the creation of new Ontario-made content that can be exported for audiences to enjoy worldwide, further building up Ontario companies and accruing economic and cultural benefits for the province.

The White Paper went on to emphasize the importance of capitalizing on emerging creative markets such as Ontario's interactive digital media industries including gaming and the production of virtual reality content to boost our province's competitive advantage. It also pointed to the establishment of a Film and Television Council, expediting processing of tax credit certification to reduce tax credit wait times and working with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLSTD) to improve film and television training opportunities for workers, as achievable short term targets.

This report, *Southwestern Ontario: Ready for Action!*, has been prepared to provide stakeholders in the film and television industry with research that explores how Ontario can continue to thrive as one of the leading film and television production hubs in North America.



The research project was coordinated by the [Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance](#) with the additional support and resources of [Ballinran Entertainment](#), the largest film and television production studio in the region. For full disclosure purposes, Craig Thompson, the primary author of this report is President and principal shareholder of Ballinran Entertainment and the founder of the Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance.

While this report focuses on research gathered in Southwestern Ontario, the results of this study and its recommendations are meant to be shared with other regions of Ontario that have the potential to reap the benefits and economic rewards of the film and television production industry. What we discovered in Southwestern Ontario are trends that are most likely mirrored in Eastern Ontario.

It is our assertion that when it comes to the expansion of the film and television production industry, Southwestern Ontario and other regions of the province are indeed "*Ready for Action!*".

Southwestern Ontario: Ready for Action! is a market research report based on our region's geographic location and broken down into several topic categories.

1. Defining Southwestern Ontario
2. State of the Industry
3. Municipalities and Local Government
4. Performing Arts
5. Post-Secondary Education
6. Film Festivals and Industry Events
7. The Union Perspective
8. Summary and Conclusions

METHODOLOGY

Research for this report was conducted through interviews with representatives of municipal governments and economic development agencies across Southwestern Ontario, unions and guilds, post-secondary institutions, performing arts organizations, production companies, industry groups and key stakeholders as well as data gathered through media sources and publicly available research information. Interviews were conducted in the Spring/Summer of 2023, and it is acknowledged that there have been changes in the film and television industry and the business environment since that time. Interviews were conducted with more than 20 municipalities across the region, unions and guilds including IATSE, ACTRA and DGC, post-secondary institutions, performing arts organizations as well as associations, government and key industry stakeholders. More than 40 interviews were conducted across the region's screenindustry sector and statements were provided by additional contacts. We collected contact details for more than 300 potential research sources. To avoid overlap and duplication, we identified a representative cross-section. For example, in local government there are townships, counties, municipalities and regions. In this case we chose the individual with the most relevant information to share. Similarly, post-secondary institutions offer many similar programs. We selected those institutions with direct relevance to the film and television industry.

This report is largely subjective in nature, a result of the fact that, while there is data on the screen industry for the Province of Ontario as a whole, as well as specific data for Toronto, Hamilton and Northern Ontario, there has been no tracking or measurement of data specific to Southwestern Ontario as a region.





CHAPTER 1

DEFINING SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

With a population approaching 2.8 million, Southwestern Ontario is the third most populous region of Canada, after Toronto and Montreal and just ahead of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. It is also one of the fastest-growing areas of Canada, particularly along the 401 corridor through the Waterloo Region.

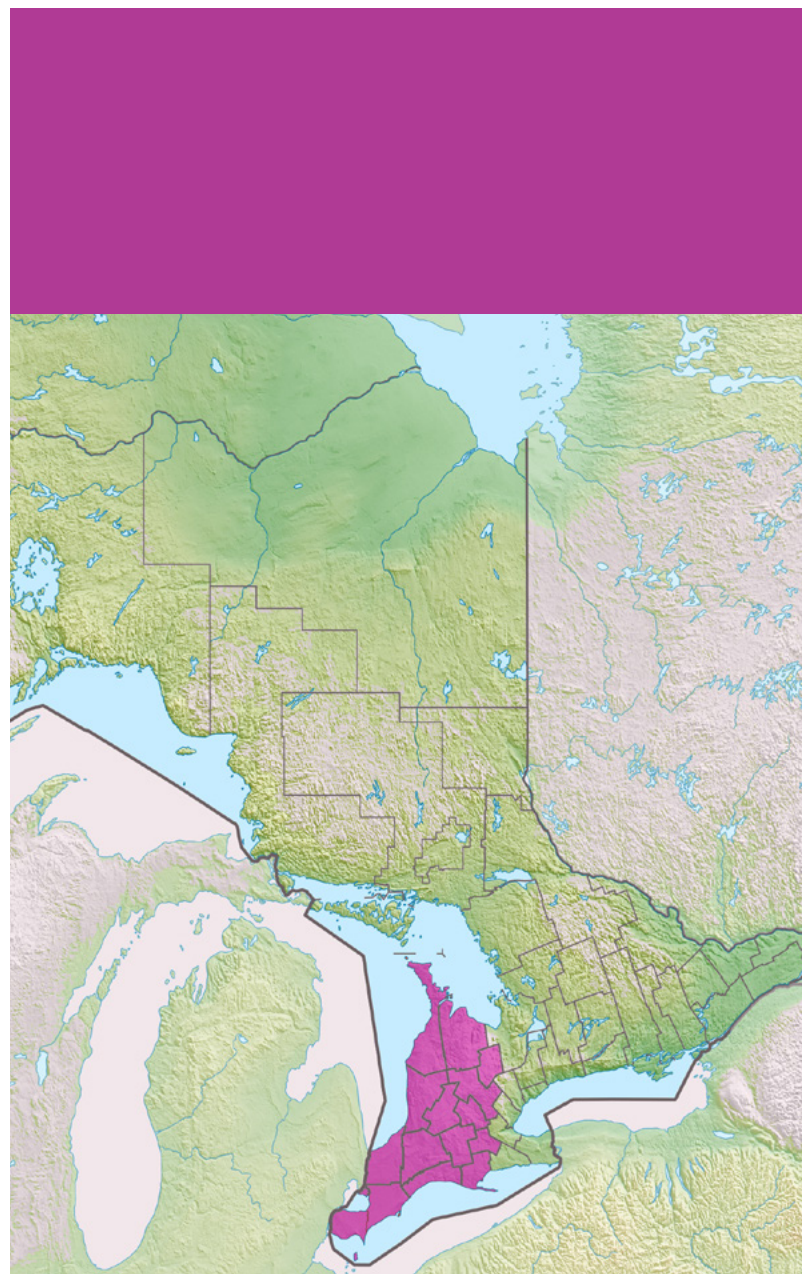
From a geographic perspective, the region can be compared in size to Switzerland or Belgium.

Southwestern Ontario is not often consistently defined and the region's boundaries are constantly evolving. The expansion of transportation infrastructure beyond the Golden Horseshoe Region around the western end of Lake Ontario has led to some debate as to where the current boundaries exist.

For the purposes of this paper, we are adopting the traditional and historic interpretation of [Southwestern Ontario](#), which encompasses the counties of Grey and Bruce along the shores of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay to the North; Wellington and Dufferin Counties to the North East; Elgin, Norfolk, Haldimand, Brant along Lake Erie's shores; Essex and Chatham-Kent adjacent to Lake St. Clair furthest south and west; and Western Ontario, which takes in Huron, Perth, Lambton, Middlesex and Oxford Counties.

Key towns and cities in the region include London, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge, Windsor, Sarnia, Brantford, Chatham, Orangeville, Owen Sound, Woodstock and Stratford.

There is some debate over whether the Hamilton-Niagara region is within Southwestern Ontario, but for the purposes of this report, we have excluded them from the



map but have consulted with stakeholders in the region for research. In the case of Hamilton, which is a major production hub, they rely heavily on locations within Southwestern Ontario including the Niagara Region. Both Niagara and the rest of Southwestern Ontario are by definition 'regional' and qualify for the regional tax credit incentives offered by the Ontario government for domestic productions.

Southwestern Ontario has a strong [Indigenous heritage](#). The region is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Attawandaron, Lenape (Delaware), and Ojibway/Chippewa Indigenous peoples. [There are more than ten established Indigenous communities in the region](#) including Six Nations of the Grand River; Mississaugas of the New Credit; Chippewas of the Thames; Walpole Island; and Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point. In addition, there are at least [ten Indigenous support organizations](#) in the region.

Geographic boundaries and definitions are important to the film and television production industry for several reasons:

- Funding agencies such as the Canada Media Fund use geographic information to create the definition of a "regional production" for regional bonus qualification. For example, to qualify for the [English Regional Production Bonus](#) in Ontario, the production company head office must be located no less than 150 km from downtown Toronto.
- Government agencies such as Ontario Creates use geographic boundaries for eligibility for the Ontario Film and Television Tax Credit '[Regional Bonus](#)'. The tax credit provides a 10% bonus on eligible costs for productions the regional bonus requirements. The definition of regional is at least 85% of the location days "Outside the Greater Toronto Area".
- Emerging organizations that represent equity seeking groups and marginalized communities such as [The Black Screen Office](#), [The Indigenous Screen Office](#), [The Disability Screen Office](#), need to have access to broad demographics as well as regional data to better target their initiatives.
- Unions and Guilds such as IATSE, [DGC](#) and ACTRA use geographic boundaries to create travel distance definitions.
 - IATSE and DGC defines the [Studio Zone](#) as an area within the boundaries of Lake Ontario to

The First Nations of Southwestern Ontario



Six Nations of the Grand River



MUNSEE-DELAWARE NATION



MISSISSAUGAS OF THE CREDIT FIRST NATION



Chippewa of the Thames



Moraviantown

the South; Winston Churchill Boulevard/Highway 50 to the West; to Major Mackenzie in the North; to the York-Durham Line to the East. Employees required to work outside of the studio zone will have their work time begin and end at the boundary of the studio zone and their travel costs are covered. IATSE can make exceptions on a case-by-case basis in which the studio zone is calculated based on a 35 km radius from the address of the production office.

- Due to its proximity to the Greater Toronto Area and its blend of natural backdrops and urban environments, [Hamilton](#) has witnessed a boom in production in recent years. As a result, Hamilton has also been designated at its own filming zone, defined by the following geographic boundaries—Winston Churchill Boulevard to Highway 401 to the Hamilton-Wentworth border to Lake Ontario. This designation means that IATSE members who work on productions are entitled to a flat fee of \$20 to account for travel time in each direction to and from the



- **ACTRA Toronto** calculates travel time based on any distance traveled by a performer beyond a 40 km radius from the ACTRA Toronto Office in downtown Toronto.

Stratford during the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The production would have involved a cast and crew of approximately 100. Since Stratford was not at capacity due to pandemic restrictions, accommodations were available, and 56% subsidy was under discussion. However, the producers decided to relocate to Ancaster, netting the production a saving of \$200,000 on travel and accommodation costs. Measures such as regional travel subsidies, could help offset costs and offer more of a cost saving to regional productions.



"We've tried for years to talk about changing boundaries and it's always become a dog's breakfast," says John Rakich, President of the Directors Guild of Canada, Location Managers Guild. "One year the DGC gave up travel to Hamilton and nobody else did, and

then the other unions did, and we refused to. And now there's what's called the Hamilton Zone IATSE Local, which does most of the service production where from Winston Churchill to basically the outer side of Hamilton is not travel time, it's a \$25 flat rate."

"I think we need to push the agenda...because if you actually look at it, more and more shows are filming outside of the core. It's not just Hamilton. They're pushing it because creatively they have to go there. The look is there. Jack Reacher season two needed a small town. The local line producers said, 'Why can't you shoot on the Danforth?' Well, luckily they showed the creative team pictures of Cayuga and they went 'that's exactly what I want'. But the line producer was doing the war dance saying, 'that's too far'. It's the boundary between creativity and logistics. Kingston, Ontario had a big swath of production come their way once they incentivized it ([offering to subsidize productions up to \\$10,000](#)) It's getting producers to realize there are financial benefits to going out there."

As for the future, Rakich suggests everyone sit down and do some long-term planning.

"We know in the next few years, we're going to have to start modifying how we do work and be more like how it's done in American jurisdictions where zones are created. This is where you work and this is where you declare that you live. So you follow these rules. So I can see in a perfect world, five, ten years from now, the Toronto Zone, there's a Kingston Zone, there's a London Zone, a Southwestern Ontario Zone, much like there's the Hamilton and Northern Ontario zones."

Apart from incentives, studio infrastructure is also a key factor in determining where many productions are filmed. While studios exist in the Greater Toronto Area, Hamilton and Northern Ontario, there is no similar infrastructure in Southwestern Ontario. If studios were to be built further into Ontario's regions, then the definition of the "Studio Zone" would have to be revisited to encourage a greater volume of regional production.

Another geographic consideration is analyzing where people live and labour mobility trends. The pandemic, coupled with the housing crisis, is pushing people away from large [urban centres such as Toronto](#). These changes in population patterns have meant that many people involved in the film and television industry now live outside of the Greater Toronto Area.



According to Alistair Hepburn, Executive Director of ACTRA Toronto, trends are pointing to a growth in active membership outside of the GTA over the last ten years. Of ACTRA Toronto's 11-thousand members, 18.6% are located in the

[L postal code region](#) (1,281 members) or [N postal code region](#) (780 members)—a total of 2,061 performers. The "L" postal code encompasses the 905 region of the Greater Toronto Area as well as urban municipalities to the north including Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe, east of the GTA including Bowmanville, Port Hope and Oshawa as well as the Niagara Region and rural Hamilton. The "N" postal code encompasses most of Southwestern Ontario from the Bruce Peninsula in the north to Lake Erie in the south to Windsor-Essex in the Southwest to Guelph and Brantford in the east.

"Based on population density, the great cultural centres and the post-secondary schools that have excellent performance programs, the number feels appropriate," says Hepburn. "We've seen a wonderful growth in membership outside of the GTHA. Ontario can 'play' anywhere in the world and productions can now truly cast the world when they choose to shoot in Ontario."

ACTRA conducts significant industry research of its own with data results on its [website](#) updated on a regular basis with the overriding message that "arts and culture are essential, not only to performers, but to our economy and our society. The film, television and digital media industry in Ontario is big business."



OPTIONS

Industry stakeholders should collaborate to develop a clear and harmonized description of Southwestern Ontario as well as other regions of the province targeted for film and television industry growth including a definition of 'regional production' and reimagined definitions of 'studio zones'.

Examine options for regional funding incentives including travel and accommodation subsidies and measures to boost incentives the further a production moves beyond the Greater Toronto Area. For example, in Southeastern Ontario, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and the [Southeastern Ontario Mayors Caucus](#) have partnered with the Southeastern Ontario Production Accelerator Fund committee to push for \$25 million to be invested annually to boost the region's film and television industry.

The model is similar to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund which has led to the region becoming one of the busiest film production regions in Canada. The full proposal for the accelerator fund is available [here](#). Although geography is only one component in analyzing the film and television production industry, the location of production is one of the key factors in determining where filming takes place. Geography is dictated by:

- Convenient access to resources, services and infrastructure for the film and television industry
- Availability of talented performers, skilled technicians, and crew
- Access to filming locations that match creative and logistical requirements
- Offer of financial incentives or cost savings
- A structured and user-friendly film permitting process



CHAPTER 2

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

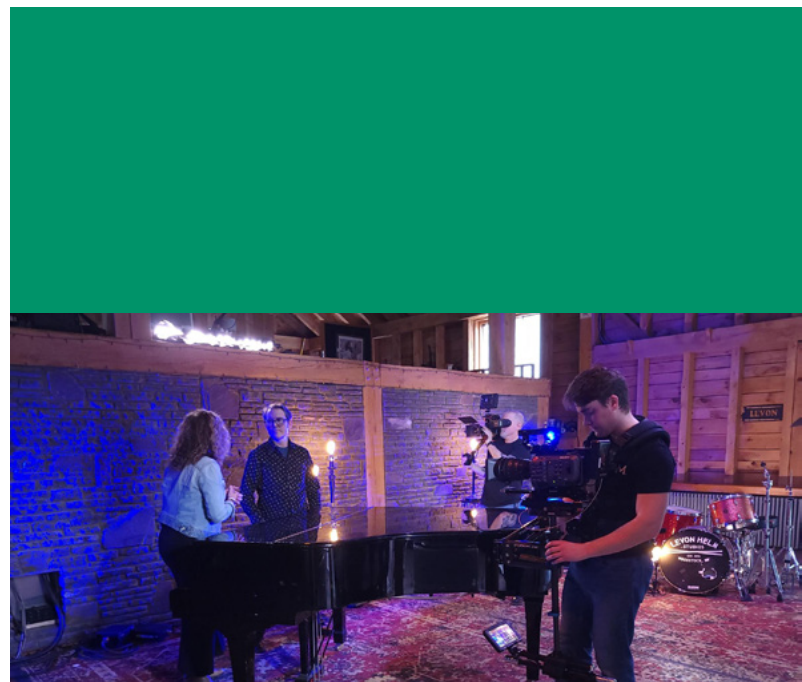
Ontario is the largest film and television production hub in Canada and, depending on the [annual data](#), is the third or fourth largest market by production volume in North America behind California, Georgia and New York. The film and television cluster in and around the Greater Toronto Area includes more than [five thousand businesses](#) active in all aspects of film and television, including production, distribution, animation, music publishing and recording and radio and television.

According to [Ontario Creates](#), the provincial government agency tasked with the economic development of the creative industries, reports that in 2023, Ontario's film and television industry generated \$1.8 billion to the provincial economy, creating more than 25-thousand jobs.

The screen industry is in the midst of a recovery—rebounding following the pandemic and from the labour disruptions in the United States that impacted the sector. [By comparison, in 2022](#), the film and television production industry contributed more than \$3.1 billion to Ontario's economy and more than 45-thousand full-time equivalent direct and spin off jobs.

Jobs created by film and television in the province include technicians (cinematographers, sound engineers, set designers, props, makeup and wardrobe professionals), producers, location managers, production coordinators, postproduction technicians, accountants and of course, performers. [The average salary of \\$79,638 per year](#) is well above the provincial average salary of \$54,834 per year.

Although there is data on the screen industry for the province as well as specific measurements for Toronto and Hamilton, there is no data specific to Southwestern



Ontario. As a result, much of this research conducted for this report has been subjective and based on anecdotal evidence gathered from interviews with key stakeholders in the industry and in the region. Without data to understand or quantify the benefits, the long-term economic benefits of the screen industry to Southwestern Ontario are difficult to measure.

The region boasts many spectacular, unique, and rarely seen film and television backdrops and for this reason, many domestic and foreign productions take advantage of Southwestern Ontario for the occasional location shoot. However, most of these shoots are short-term in nature and do not make a sustainable economic impact on the region.

The economic benefits described above are, for the most part, focused on the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas



and in Northern Ontario, where a special production financial incentive is offered. There is currently 3.85 million square feet of stage or studio space in Ontario, mostly in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas, with an additional 1.6 million square feet scheduled to be completed over the next few years.

While much of the infrastructure, resources and most of the skilled labour force are in the GTHA, these assets have also led to high demand which often puts the region at overcapacity, forcing some productions to move elsewhere or shift production schedules. Studios are often fully booked for weeks and months at a time. Familiar locations are frequently used and for residents and neighbourhoods, the novelty of film production has long-since worn off. Additionally, the high cost of living in Toronto has prompted many in the skilled labour pool from crew to performers to move to areas at the fringes of the Greater Toronto area or beyond.

John Rakich, President of the Location Managers Guild, serves on the frontline of production - the advance party of the film and television industry. Long before the cameras start rolling, he or his colleagues are seeking out locations to match the creative demands of a film or television production as well as taking budgets into consideration.

He says that while Toronto is the heart of the industry, the city has lost some of its lustre as a location simply because of logistics.

"We're creatures of habit, so we tend to revisit a lot of the same places because we know we're dealing with friendly entities. But filming in downtown Toronto five years ago was different than it is now. With bike lanes and the constant construction, there's less and less linear space to park. We've always had an issue with our footprint. Our footprints get larger. We try to retract them. We used to use very very large trucks—53-foot tractor trailers—but that size of vehicle no longer fits anywhere. So, if you want to shoot in Toronto you have to be creative with it. And if you've ever seen a film set, there's a lot of equipment that needs to be put into sometimes not a very big space."

As a result of these trends, many productions have shifted to the Hamilton area while others have chosen Northern Ontario as their production base. In the recent "[Northern Ontario Workforce Assessment and Studio Infrastructure Report](#)", completed by Cultural Industries Ontario North (CION) with the support of Ontario

Creates, the authors analyze the state of the industry in Northern Ontario, and report that the volume of film and television productions in Northern Ontario has historically demonstrated a consistent upward trajectory.

"The volume of film and television productions in Northern Ontario ...accounted for 12% of Ontario's total production in 2018. From 2019 to 2022, it remained stable at 7% of Ontario's production.

At present, Southwestern Ontario does not possess the attributes necessary to attract film and television production in a sustainable way, beyond the occasional location shoot. The following factors are at play:

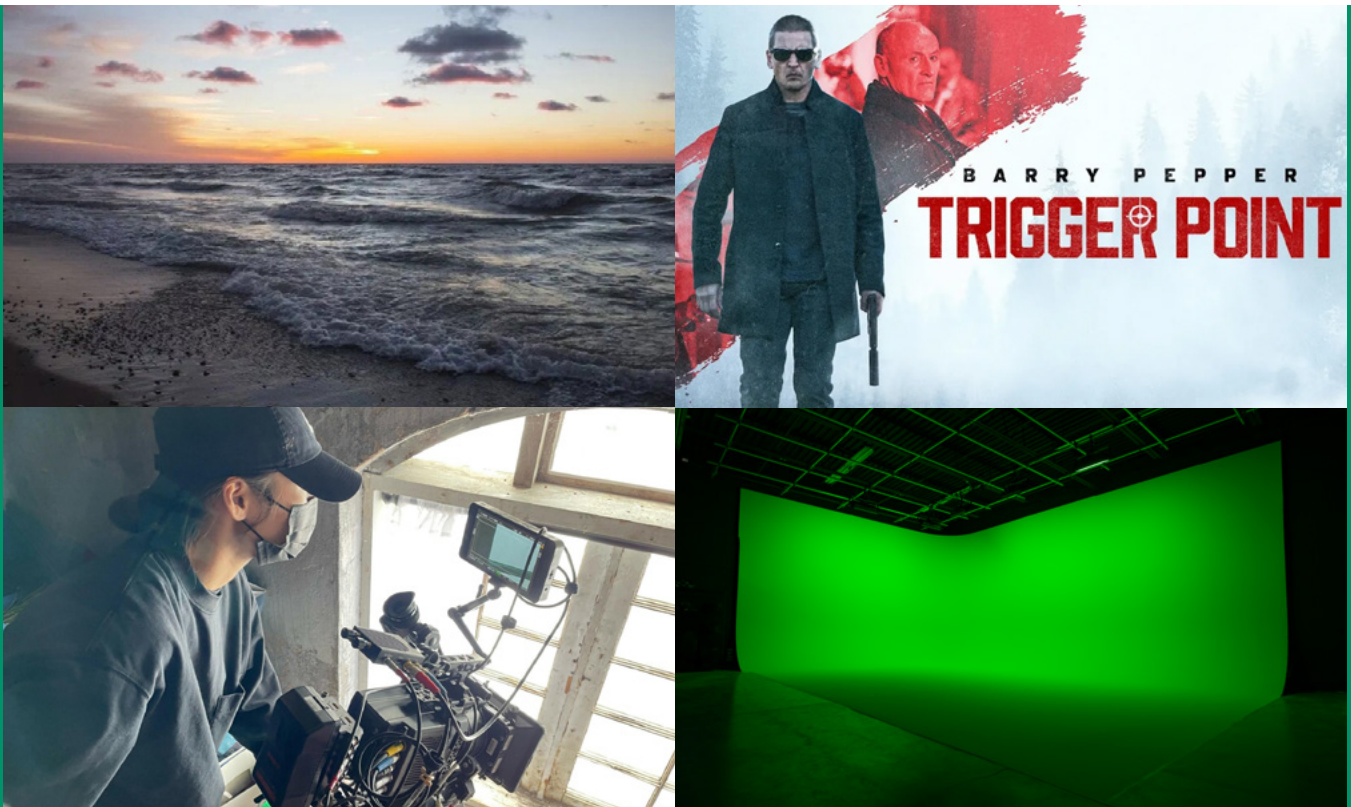
- Travel, accommodation and location considerations add to the cost of production
- Most key creatives, crew and performers must travel from outside of Southwestern Ontario to get to the location
- Although there are a growing number of exceptions, most municipalities in the Southwestern Ontario do not have a consistent film permitting policy or even a film office

- Lack of a major production equipment depot in the region which means most gear must travel in from Toronto
- Limited studio infrastructure or production support facilities able to accommodate long-term production shoots in the region.

Despite these potential barriers, several productions have chosen to film some of their scenes in Southwestern Ontario, largely due to the unique locations required for the productions.

In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, High Point Entertainment and Landmark Studio Group, both Canadian companies, decided to film "*Trigger Point*" in Bayfield, Ontario, on the shores of Lake Huron. The lead actor in the production, Colm Feore, lived close by in Stratford and the director of the film lived part of the year in Bayfield.

Producer Eric Birnberg credits the regional tax credit bonus available to domestic productions and the fact that many locations in rural regions are not often featured in film or television productions.



Photos (from left to right): 1. Howard Beach, Bayfield, Village of Bayfield
| 2. Trigger Point | 3. Courtesy of Cultural Industries Ontario North (CION)
| 4. Courtesy of Tiny Horse Film Studios

"If you find a small town, like a Bayfield, there is a great deal of excitement when a production comes to town. You're not competing with other films; things are quieter than in a larger urban setting and you can shoot on a bridge and not worry about shutting down traffic. It makes for a smoother production."

It was the first time a motion picture had been filmed in Bayfield and the economic benefit resulted in the influx of more than 100 cast and crew with hotel bookings and other economic impacts.

Many other productions have chosen to film all or part of their non-studio or location days in Southwestern Ontario including:

Murdoch Mysteries

Guelph

St. Marys

Stratford

Cambridge

In the Tall Grass

Stratford

St. Marys

Self Made

Stratford

Handmaid's Tale

Cambridge

Amazing Race Canada

Bruce Peninsula

Stratford

Woodstock

Kitchener Waterloo

Niagara Region

IT

Elora

West Montrose

The Queen's Gambit

Cambridge

FUBAR

Elora

London

In 2016, the Canadian Media Producers Association commissioned a report examining the impact of specific productions on the economy. One of the case studies was *Murdoch Mysteries* and the report detailed the economic value generated by this one series alone. Over 10 seasons, Murdoch created nearly five thousand jobs, generated \$471 million in economic output and benefited more than 100 businesses outside of the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area.



PERSPECTIVE

JUSTIN CUTLER

FILM COMMISSIONER—ONTARIO CREATES



As Film Commissioner for Ontario Creates, Justin Cutler offers both a wide-angle and detailed perspective on the state of the screen industry in Ontario. In our conversation, Cutler shared insights into the current climate of production, the expansion

of activity beyond the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the critical role of locations and municipalities, and the careful, measured approach required for future growth across the province.

Ontario Creates is the provincial government agency that administers various incentives, including a 35% refundable tax credit on Ontario labour costs for domestic productions, an additional 10% regional bonus for productions with the majority of location days outside the GTA, and complementary federal credits. For foreign productions, Ontario offers a 21.5% refundable tax credit on both labour and production expenditures, alongside an 18% credit for computer animation and special effects labour.

Cutler notes that over the past five years, production has radiated across Ontario in search of unique locations made possible through the support of competitive tax credits, targeted funding streams like the NOHFC in Northern Ontario, and the proactive work of municipalities to develop film-friendly policies. Northern Ontario, he says, has moved beyond just being a filming destination to becoming a hub of new production infrastructure and training partnerships with post-secondary institutions.

Other communities—including Ottawa, Kingston, Port Hope, Cambridge, Brantford, and the Durham Region—are also playing increasingly important roles by building support services and promoting local filming. Ottawa, he observes, continues to break records for local live action production volume, and also is further elevated by a strong animation industry.

In the Greater Toronto Area, Cutler points out that much of the new stage development has expanded outside of the city's core to Mississauga and Durham Region allowing productions to extend their reach in the province. He emphasizes that unique and well-documented locations, paired with strong municipal support, are giving Ontario a significant competitive advantage internationally.

Cutler stresses that location readiness and municipal coordination are key to attracting more production. Communities that have clear and industry-informed film policies and expedient permitting processes have the best chance for attracting and retaining production investment. Further, those organizing familiarization tours for location managers position themselves for success. Municipalities are encouraged to contribute to Ontario Creates' Locations Library to ensure their assets are visible to the global production industry, through the location consultation service the Film Commission offers to producers.

Regarding the future of studio development outside the GTA, Cutler offers a note of caution. He advises that the immediate priority should not be building new studio facilities, but rather strengthening local industry capacity by, mobilizing local production support services and repurposing existing spaces like warehouses or arenas for production. Purpose-built studios, he notes, become viable only after a community has developed a critical mass of consistent production activity, a process that took many years even in Northern Ontario.



Looking ahead, Cutler sees potential for specialized production clusters similar to Ottawa's animation sector or Waterloo's tech-driven contributions to media innovation. He highlights London's investment in a film office as an example of proactive municipal engagement, and suggests that Stratford's performing arts infrastructure could be further leveraged to grow a local screen industry.

Cutler remains cautiously optimistic about future growth, acknowledging external pressures such as labour negotiations and global industry and economic shifts that could affect production levels. He emphasizes that Ontario's strong value proposition, including competitive incentives, skilled talent, attractive locations, and favorable exchange rates, positions the province well to navigate upcoming challenges.

For municipalities seeking to raise their profile, Cutler offers the following practical advice:

- Capture and contribute high-quality location imagery to Ontario Creates Locations Library.
- Organize familiarization tours to showcase unique assets.
- Ensure internal processes like permitting, parking, and bylaw coordination are production-ready.
- Track and capture economic impact data when productions come to town, starting with anticipated local spending during permitting.

Finally, Cutler reinforces that while Ontario Creates supports and promotes all regions equally, regional success ultimately depends on local leadership, coordination, and the development of strong, film-friendly communities.

PERSPECTIVE

CYNTHIA LYNCH

MANAGING DIRECTOR, FILMONTARIO

Cynthia Lynch is the Managing Director of [FilmOntario](#), an industry consortium representing the more than 45-thousand individuals working the screen-based industry in Ontario. Member organizations include unions and guilds, production companies, studios, suppliers, and financial and legal service organizations. FilmOntario works both formally and informally with the province, through Ontario Creates, as well as with municipalities, to promote Ontario as a filming jurisdiction.

In 2023, FilmOntario released findings of a 2022 study by [Price Waterhouse Coopers](#) into the benefits of the tax credits, which estimated that for each dollar refunded to the industry through the film and television tax credits, \$3.40 in GDP is generated in the province.

In 2022, FilmOntario, as a member of the Minister's Film and Television Advisory Panel, effectively lobbied the provincial government to expand the tax credits to on-line only productions and add the eligibility of location fees under the Ontario Production Services Tax Credit to make expenses in leasing restaurants, homes, stores and other locations, eligible costs for the tax credit. In the Ontario Fall Economic Statement in 2022, there was also a renewed commitment to support workforce development through the Skills Development Fund.

"In Ontario, historically, we've had a good balance between domestic productions and service productions. When there is uncertainty in one area, like we saw with the strikes, the other can help balance things out. The Premier has said he would like us to be a \$5-billion industry but to do that, there are some things that need to happen. The tax credits need to be stable and competitive, and our foreign partners need to see us as a reliable jurisdiction because we are up against over 30 U.S. states which have tax credit programs of their own. I wouldn't describe Ontario's tax credit as the most generous in the industry, but we are 'middle of the road' and that's fairly sustainable."

Lynch also sees the need to expand the industry beyond the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area but there needs to be more investment in skills training and workforce development. "A good example is what's been happening in Northern Ontario. It's a big region and today you can crew almost everything up north, but it has taken 15 years to get to that point. For other regions, where there isn't consistent work and only three or four shows a year, it's hard to retain your crew in a local area. It really is a long-term investment."

When it comes to building interest in locations beyond the GTHA, Lynch congratulates jurisdictions like Kingston which offered financial incentives to cover accommodation and hospitality. While it's not a lot of money, it is an offset, she says, and this kind of innovative program could be offered in other communities that are seeking to attract interest from film and television productions.



MUNICIPALITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Within Southwestern Ontario, most communities do not have a dedicated film office. The responsibility of being the liaison between the municipality and the film and television production industry falls to an individual within the economic development department who fields enquiries.

As part of our research process, we consulted with several small communities including Waterloo, Bruce County, St. Marys, Brant County, Collingwood/Blue Mountain, Haldimand County and Wellington County. We've chosen to highlight the following communities to represent the broad spectrum of experiences across the region.

London

In April 2021, the [City of London allocated a budget of \\$300,000](#) to establish the [London Film Office](#). In July 2024, the London City Council voted to [extend the Film Office to 2027](#).

Cambridge

This municipality midway between the GTA and London is benefiting from the production overflow of Toronto and Hamilton. Cambridge Economic Development has a [dedicated website](#) for film and television productions and boasts of productions such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Queen's Gambit*, *The Good Witch*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, *The Hardy Boys*, to name but a few. Like many jurisdictions in Ontario, Cambridge witnessed a major slump in production in 2023 due to the [Hollywood Writers' and Actors' strikes](#).

City of Kitchener

Like Cambridge, the City of Kitchener is a second-tier municipality within Waterloo Region and has a [film and music office](#) within the economic development department that is dedicated to attracting more productions to the community.

City of Brantford

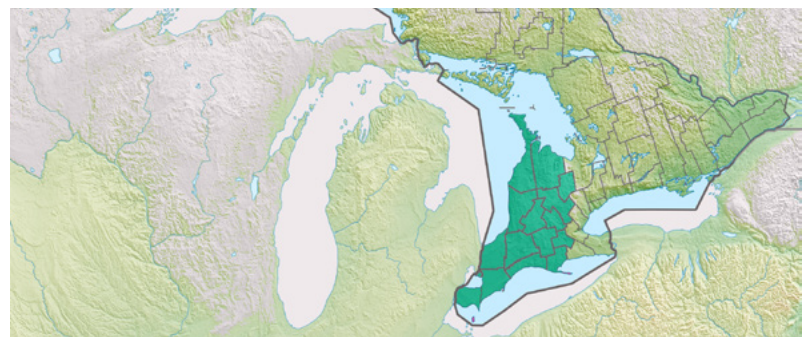
For a smaller community, Brantford has invested considerable resources on promoting the potential as a filming location, earning a nomination for an [Outstanding Film Commission Award](#) from the Location Managers Guild International.

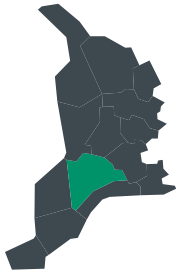
Elgin County

Located midway between Toronto and Detroit, Elgin County includes seven local municipalities on Lake Erie's shores in Southwestern Ontario. [The county has big ambitions](#) for the film and television industry and wants to do more to promote the area as film-friendly.

Stratford

Stratford and nearby St. Marys, with their unique architecture and heritage downtowns, are often used as locations for film and television. Stratford has recently completed a Municipal Cultural Strategy that includes a recommendation for expanding its potential as a film and television location.





CASE STUDY CITY OF LONDON

'Build it and they will come' was the mindset of Film London when the City of London approved the creation of the London Film Office with a budget of \$300,000 in April 2021. According to Andrew Dodd, Manager of the Film Office, the idea was to establish the office and attract productions to the city with incentives, both monetary and non-monetary.

"When this office was being developed, our approach was really unique in the sense that we were really putting the cart before the horse," says Dodd. "There was a great passion and interest to build and attract the industry as opposed to waiting for the demand to land on our doorstep, so to speak. No, let's start from scratch and build it on the premise of 'what's within our power to make London as attractive as possible?'"

Dodd is a film buff who majored in English and philosophy in university and was working for the City of London in the recreation department when the opportunity arose to seek the position of Manager of the Film London. He says approach from day one has been to serve as a 'concierge' to the productions coming in. "I will take the time to say, tell me about your production. Tell me about the locations you're looking for."

The impetus to create Film London can be traced back to several influencing factors. [The Forest City Film Festival](#), established in 2016, raised awareness of the film industry and the expanding ranks of content creators in London and surrounding areas, including those originally from London and now working in major centres such as Toronto. The reputation of the [Advanced Filmmaking Program at Fanshawe College](#) and the presence of talented faculty and a constant stream of creative students produced a 'strength in numbers' attitude, demonstrating that London had a potential future labour pool of emerging creators. There was also support from

local politicians with a passion for the film industry.

Among the first tasks undertaken by Film London was a billboard advertising campaign entitled "[One Stop, For Reel](#)", spoofing major Hollywood motion pictures to highlight the benefits of filming in London. While the campaign generated positive feedback, Dodd points out that locations on their own don't drive the bus - financial incentives are a necessity.

"Filming in London can be cheaper than the major film hubs in Canada and we tell producers they will save money on locations and permitting, but the main barrier is the cost of travel and accommodation," says Dodd. "In order to overcome that barrier in a meaningful way, we need structural changes to the incentives like a tax credit or reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs. You need something big to shake up the cycle and demonstrate that filming here is worth the investment."

"It's all about building momentum and having a long-term vision for the industry," says Dodd.

Film London's long-term vision involves:

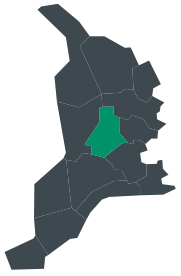
- Building a database of crew and resources (there are currently 160 locations, 138 crew members, 165 performers, 85 resources listed on the database);
- Collaborating with post-secondary institutions such as Fanshawe and Western, both with film or media programs and the Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology ([OIRT](#)) to build a home-grown production industry. There is currently a concern that too many graduates leave the region in search of employment. The goal is to reverse the outflow to create a skilled labour pool in London;
- Forging linkages with former Londoners in the production industry who have sought work elsewhere but might be enticed to return home should the film industry in London be robust enough to offer year-round employment.

London

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A film office should be viewed as a concierge service that facilitates a smooth relationship between a production and the municipality government and liaising with all stakeholders.
- Success will be driven by a cooperative government, and a well-informed and welcoming community.
- Research and explore what the industry is looking for, what types of locations are in demand and what does London or any community have that is unique. Develop a workforce for long-term sustainability of the industry.
- Partner with educational institutions to create a homegrown content industry and skilled labour pool for the future.
- Collaborate and create strong relationships with neighboring municipalities, particularly the smaller communities as a production often needs multiple locations across jurisdictions.
- Consult with film offices in larger municipalities and participate in the weekly Ontario Creates film commissioners meeting.
- Build a database of support resources such as catering, hotel accommodations and other services often in demand by film and television productions and educate property owners on the logistics and process involved.
- London and Southwestern Ontario need a regional equipment hub to reduce the need for transport. One company, [Set Ready Films](#) has been established in London catering to the needs of the local market.
- To grow the industry and bring productions to the region, London will require a tangible financial incentive that demonstrates to production companies the cost benefits of filming in London.





CASE STUDY CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Devon Hogue has had the opportunity to witness firsthand the benefit generated by the film and television industry in two different communities in Southwestern Ontario, first as the film liaison officer in the City of Cambridge Economic Development Department and more recently as the Business Development Consultant, Creative Industries for the City of Hamilton.

When she joined the Economic Development Department in the City of Cambridge, attracting productions to the area was off the side of her desk and not a priority. There had been two productions the previous year and very few inquiries.

"When I started in Cambridge, I had no background in the film industry but we had a city manager who really wanted to attract filming to Cambridge and thought it was a good opportunity for economic development and investment in the community," Hogue recalls.

As a 'newbie' to the film and television industry, Hogue sought out mentors, reaching out to the Toronto and Hamilton film offices, and asked them to "teach" her the ropes. "It was a real learning experience, gaining the knowledge and insight within the film industry and the type of things I needed to be looking for. It was the best thing I could have done to grow Cambridge and while we developed slowly, I was able to build up a list of assets, locations, resources and work towards a process that mirrored both Toronto and Hamilton, but on a smaller scale."

That relationship building exercise with other jurisdictions paid off for Cambridge, with word-of-mouth referrals from both Hamilton and Toronto. "When they were overwhelmed with productions they would say 'have you met our friends in Cambridge and it grew gradually from





there," she says. "But our real growth started once we had large projects and the word got out. Yes Cambridge is a little further away, but we could help out with productions the same way the big communities can and we made sure they knew they were welcome here." Hogue says getting on the radar of the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC) Location Managers was a turning point.

She also credits the elected officials in Cambridge, the Mayor and Members of City Council, whose buy-in was critical in developing the city's film policy. "Our mayor at the time was very supportive and you need that buy-in from the political level as well as the senior leadership team because with film you need to be nimble and responsive across multiple departments to make things happen," says Hogue. "It's not just economic development saying we must do this; it's how do you get your traffic department involved? How to get agreement on parking, on the use of parks and city facilities. Everyone needs to be on board and understand the importance."

When Hogue started in her role in Cambridge, the film sector represented about five per cent of her workload. When she departed for the new position in Hamilton, 85% of her time was spent on the film industry file. She attributes the growth in Cambridge to a number of factors:

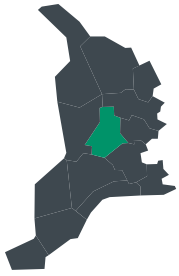
- Cambridge has great location assets including historic Galt, Cambridge's iconic 1920s main street bridge and the village of Hespeler. Once a production booked the main asset, Hogue would inquire about the need for other locations within the area.
- The success of large projects like *The Handmaid's Tale* led to more buy-in within the industry, adding to Cambridge's credibility and reputation as a filming location.
- Hogue initiated the successful #capturecambridge project, which led to the submission of 125 new and unique locations, some of which Hogue, as a long-time resident, hadn't seen before.
- Leveraging the tourism and promotional benefits. As a result of shows like *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Queen's Gambit*, Cambridge is now part of pop culture and is featured on apps like "Set Jetter".
- Using the news media and social media to share behind the scenes

Cambridge

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- If you are a smaller municipality and just starting out with the film industry, learn from those with experience in larger jurisdictions.
- Even if it's a part-time position to start, each municipality should have their own individual responsible for fielding calls from production companies. That individual should know their community, have the relationships and the connections to ask the right questions. Any knowledge gaps can be addressed by reaching out to larger municipalities.
- Establish an education program or workshop for elected officials, senior municipal leadership and staff from the various departments, bringing in film industry experts and those from other municipalities. The film office is not only a facilitator, it should be a liaison between the industry and the municipality as well as an educator for those within the municipality highlighting the importance of the film industry to the local community.
- If you are in a two-tier municipality like Cambridge, which reports up to the Waterloo Regional Government, get buy-in on the film permitting strategy from the upper-tier, especially important when it comes regional bylaws and permission to use regional roads as rules often vary between the two levels of government.
- Be aware of the logistical needs of a film crew such as the need for parking, a production base camp, ready access to locations, and potential hotel and restaurant discounts.
- Productions often want to film downtown so that affects parking, traffic flow, local businesses and depending on the time of day, the municipality's noise bylaw.
- When a big production comes to town, celebrate the win, leveraging stories and anecdotes about businesses and individuals in town who might have benefited, such as a local bakery whose cupcakes went viral when a well-known actor shared a post on social media.
- Your community may be one of several used in a production so remember you are part of a wider network.
- Track results on both measurable and subjective data such as hotel stays, businesses that benefited and anecdotal feedback from the community. In Cambridge, the local food bank benefited from a donation of excess food from one of the productions.
- Film production is fast-paced, and the industry has no patience to wait for lengthy delays in approvals. They have other location options. So be aware of potential administrative 'roadblocks' in your community.
- If the industry is going to expand in a measurable way outside of the Studio Zones in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton, then additional financial incentives should be explored.
- There is a role to be played by a regional organization such as the Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance as a facilitator of training and education for smaller municipalities; as a lobby group advocating for more funding incentives; as a champion for skill development programs to increase the labour pool in the region; and as a promoter, highlighting productions shot in the region.





CASE STUDY CITY OF KITCHENER

Bob Egan made his name in the music industry as a talented multi-instrumentalist for the Canadian band Blue Rodeo. During his eighteen-year run with the band, he performed in over 15-hundred shows in North America and around the world.

His knowledge of music led him to the position, at the time of our interview, as the Film and Music Officer for the [City of Kitchener](#).

"There are a number of things that make this job unique," says Egan. "I have two portfolios; one is film and the other is music. I am the first film officer, so I had to build it up from the foundation." He credits Devon Hogue, the former film liaison officer in Cambridge, as being instrumental in helping him get up to speed.

His first task involved reviewing the 180 locations listed on the Kitchener location library, removing the ones that were no longer relevant, useful, or available, then hiring an experienced location scout to uncover new locations. He then engaged with Ontario Creates which provided him with a photographer to come out to Kitchener to capture shots of key locations.

"We were able to photograph about a dozen locations and upload them to the library," says Egan. "The support of Ontario Creates was very welcome."

Step two was working with his municipal colleagues across the various departments to develop permits, protocols, procedures as there was nothing in place. He developed relationships with the departments responsible for by-law enforcement, traffic, parks, parking, fire and police services, to ensure that when filming requests came in, he knew who to reach out to. As a second-tier municipality, he also built relationships with

the Region of Waterloo to take advantage of desirable regional properties.

From Egan's experience the high value locations are hospitals, courtrooms, police stations, schools and parks. Finally, Egan created sizzle reels for the various locations in Kitchener and shared them with his network of location scouts he developed when he started the Kitchener Film Office:

"Realistically, what I need to focus on is domestic production because they have the regional tax incentive to come out here and film and non-domestic productions don't receive that tax incentive. We are outside of the Studio Zone, so the production is responsible for paying the crew from the moment they leave Toronto. Once that boundary, the production has to offer overnight accommodation and per diems. So on a typical production that could add up to significant costs."

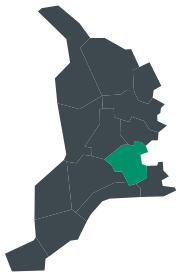


City of Kitchener

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Without additional financial incentives to increase production in the region, Kitchener has done as much as it can to position itself as a location.
- For the time being, domestic production is the focus, due to lower budgets and the regional tax incentives.
- Egan will continue to work on marketing the city's unique locations and those beyond its boundaries such as Mennonite farms and rural settings.
- Continue to develop relationships with location scouts and location managers and organize familiarization tours.
- Address workforce development issues through outreach to secondary schools and post-secondary institutions such as the University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University and Conestoga College, all which offer programs related to the media sector.
- Create a youth and emerging talent database and offer mentorship with more experience members of the screen industry.





CASE STUDY

CITY OF BRANTFORD

The City of Brantford currently has one film officer, Kevin Dekok, who works within the economic development department. Given the community's proximity to the production hub of Hamilton, Brantford witnessed an increase in production even before the film office was established.

Brantford has been featured in such productions as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Mayor of Kingstown* and *Station 11* and was nominated for an Outstanding Film Commission Award from the International Guild of Location Managers.

As a single-tier municipality, Dekok says it is easier to streamline approvals across multiple departments as he is the single point of contact for the film industry. While he doesn't sign off on approvals, as the film liaison, he connects the production with the relevant departments for approval.

There were a few productions that were knocking on our door when we weren't, you know, fully built out in terms of our foundation and preparations. And it was actually walking through with some of them that we learned, you know, the trade and the skill a little bit better. Certainly we connected with other municipalities, but having that kind of work through and walking through with the production has helped us.

"There were a few early productions that helped us hone and shape our trade and skill here in Brantford. And then that grew as more productions came our way and we were able to build our own expertise and experience. But that knowledge base on how to provide service to the film industry grew over time. You must understand the fluid nature of film, the fact that it's a temporary project with short timelines and changing demands, so your partners at the municipality and community stakeholders need to be aware of all that."

Setting up a film office is not without its challenges and Dekok cautions other municipalities to take the time to develop the film strategy that is right for their community.

"It's hard to see the benefit of film unless you've been through it at least once," says Dekok. "Film is a disruption to a community, to municipal services so you need to work through that to see the ultimate benefit. Without the proof concept showing the process and demonstrating how to see the opportunity in the disruptions, it's difficult to prepare everyone on what to expect"

Under Dekok's leadership, Brantford has established a community partner program, whereby managers or owners of any location or spaces within Brantford that might be of interest to film and television production, are invited to submit their property to the local location library. In Brantford's case, community partners include school boards, universities, hospitals, museums, warehouses, industrial spaces, commercial properties and any unique properties including churches, private homes and other structures.

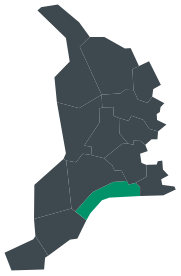
"It's all about building trust between the production company and the community and being willing to invest the time and effort on those relationships. And if they've had a good experience in Brantford, they will want to come back."

City of Brantford

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Brantford has encouraged the use of Local Impact Reports which production companies complete to outline how a production will affect a local community. These are made available via news outlets, social media and occasionally door-to-door if a specific neighbourhood will be affected.
- When it comes to parking and road closures, two of the most common requests, there is no one size fits all solution as each production will have different requirements.
- Film and television production is a fast-paced, intensive, disruptive, and sometimes challenging process and requires support and understanding from internal municipal stakeholders. It occupies a large footprint in an area that will change the ways locals live/work so it's best to anticipate complaints, be open about the disruption and find a way of mitigating the impact.
- Don't focus on singular production companies or key personnel. Focus on making the municipality functional and financially beneficial to the film sector.
- Locations are usually chosen first by cost and second by look. A roster of location assets should include those that are either unique to your community or would be challenging for a production company to book in a major urban centre (i.e., courtrooms).
- Build relationships with community partners and create champions and supporters who you can call upon when a production expresses interest in your location.
- Reach out to more experienced municipalities for advice on building a film office, marketing and sustaining up-to-date local relationships.
- Where possible, implement a single invoice from the film office to the production incorporating the different internal stakeholders.





CASE STUDY ELGIN COUNTY

Elgin County is located to the south of London and includes within its boundaries the City of St. Thomas and the communities of Aylmer and Port Stanley. Elgin is one of many two-tier systems of governance with seven second tier municipalities within its borders. While St. Thomas is within its borders, it is a single-tier municipality. The county is in the early stages of its relationship with the screen industries and is interested in attracting more productions to their area.

"Most of our involvement in the film industry so far has developed organically," says Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives. "A production finds a location and they come here. We have the psychiatric hospital in St. Thomas ([soon to be repurposed by the Ontario government](#)) which has hosted several Hollywood movies. Port Stanley is also a popular location with a unique small town feel on the shores of Lake Erie but we haven't actively promoted ourselves as a filming location."

All of the key locations in Elgin County are accessible through the Ontario Creates, a resource that was put together after the production of the Apple TV series [Locke & Key](#), filmed partly in Elgin County in 2020.

The fact that neighbouring London now has a well-established film office is a benefit, Krahn says. Not only are the two communities linked economically, but London will be able to refer productions to specific locations in Elgin County to encourage more filming in the region.

Any enquiries that do come their way are handled by the three-person team in the economic development team in Elgin County. As a result of feedback from the production company involved with *Locke & Key*, Elgin County launched

a webpage [Filming in Elgin](#), which outlines the standard operating procedures within the county.

One of the challenges at the time was the need for the production company to gain approval from at least two or three different government bodies for certain filming requests, particularly for the use of roads that crossed municipal boundaries. This was something the production company hadn't expected. Elgin County has now streamlined this process with its second-tier municipalities.



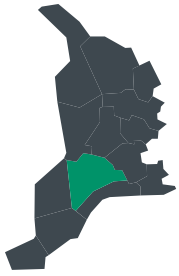
Elgin County

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In areas where there is a multi-tiered system of governance like Elgin County:

- Create an agreement between the different tiers of government to streamline the approval process and avoid the involvement of council when possible
- Clearly define the areas, public spaces and roads that are controlled by different entities.
- Organize and clearly explain the differences between the tiers of government and make this accessible to a film production.
- Centralize information and approvals that a production company would require, perhaps in the form of a questionnaire or form to be completed to determine all of the requirements of filming (i.e. pyrotechnics, basecamp, parking, road closures, drone filming, etc.)
- Production companies are experienced and expect fast turnaround times, so ensure the municipal film officer has the ability to push through the approval process quickly and avoid delays whenever possible.





CASE STUDY CITY OF STRATFORD

Stratford, Ontario is one of North America's preeminent arts and culture hubs. Home to the Stratford Festival, Stratford Symphony Orchestra, Stratford Summer Music and many other attractions, the city attracts well over half a million visitors annually concentrated within the months of May to October.

Stratford has a long connection to the film industry. Starting in the 1950s and into the 1960s, the community was home to the Stratford International Film Festival. Revived in the early 1970s, it was the precursor to Toronto's Festival of Festivals (now TIFF) and was the subject of a 2016 paper by Jessica Thom, entitled [The Rise and Fall of the Stratford International Film Festival](#).

SIFF, which ran from 1956-61 and again from 1971-76, was Canada's first international festival for feature films. The film festival asserted Canada's cultural presence on the world stage as part of a larger push to raise Canada's cultural profile in the aftermath of the Second World War, and built on the meteoric success of the theatre and music programs at the Stratford Festival. This paper positions SIFF within a growing body of literature that treats festivals as places of geopolitical and socioeconomic competition and underscores how the second edition of SIFF developed the concept of an audience-driven "Festival of Festivals" which the Toronto festival of the same name would appropriate in 1976.

During the 1980s when the railway shops shut down, the acclaimed Canadian film director Norman Jewison, who had strong connections to Stratford, was invited to review the potential to transform the abandoned shops into a film studio. Today, the 18-hectare parcel of land that includes the [Grand Trunk Shops](#) remains abandoned and is currently the focus of a potential redevelopment project.





As a result of Stratford's position as an arts and culture hub, the city is home to many actors, technicians, writers and creative personnel involved in both the theatre and film and television industry.

The television production industry is also represented by [Ballinran Entertainment](#), the leading film and television production company based in Southwestern Ontario. Ballinran, which has been involved in the preparation of this report, is based in the heart of Stratford's heritage downtown. [Established in 1995](#), the company produces documentaries for Canadian broadcasters and international platforms such as Netflix, Amazon and Discovery. Ballinran is also the company behind [Stageview.TV](#), Canada's independent streaming platform for the performing arts, approved in 2023 by the Department of Canadian Heritage as a tax credit eligible platform and approved in September 2024 by the CRTC as a discretionary broadcasting service.

Stratford has limited experience with film and television productions. As referenced earlier, Murdoch Mysteries, Self-Made and Amazing Race Canada are among the productions that have filmed in the community. The Toronto Star described Stratford as a picture-postcard [Hallmark town](#).

For several years, the Stratford Festival has been filming their major Shakespeare productions for distribution on CBC, in Cineplex Cinemas and on the festival's streaming service.

However, Stratford's popularity as a tourist destination during the peak months of May–October also presents challenges for growth of the film and television industry.

"I feel fairly strongly that Stratford has an opportunity to leverage its reputation as a cultural destination and expand our offering to be more TV and film friendly," says Zac Gribble, Executive Director of Destination Stratford. "I agree that a lot of the skills are transferable from the world of theatre to the world of film and TV and that Stratford has some of the finest heritage buildings and locations in Ontario, but there will be a difficulty for the production industry to align with a destination like ours, which is highly seasonal. We are at capacity for a good four months of the year."

Stratford is currently focused on enhancing its destination appeal in the shoulder seasons and has recently developed a sports tourism strategy which Gribble says could ultimately attract major sporting

events in the non-theatre season, events which could also be appealing to the film and television industry. There are other cultural aspects to Stratford that could be leveraged for film and television content. "The culinary arts are a very strong component of the visitor economy, and we have a number of other festivals that have proven to be a drawing card including Lights On Stratford and Stratford Summer Music."

In 2023, the [City of Stratford](#) unveiled its new municipal cultural plan which included the following recommendation:

Consider developing a streamlined permitting process to encourage film crews to shoot films in public spaces around Stratford (e.g. streets, sidewalks, parking lots, facilities, and greenspaces). Stratford has an abundance of entertainment industry experts (e.g., directors, producers, actors, costume and set designers) who can be leveraged to support a local film industry.

Gribble says that Stratford must look beyond the summer months to grow other periods of the year. "Our capacity to serve, to host major events from accommodation to culinary, that is a real pinch point. That is why we are looking for opportunities to develop our shoulder seasons. What can we offer outside of the summer months?"

While Stratford does have unique locations and a local labour pool of actors and technicians, for now, Stratford does not have the infrastructure such as accommodation, hospitality and other services that make it attractive to outside productions. However, there is an opportunity to develop a homegrown industry tapping into both the veteran and experienced creative professionals in the community as well as emerging creators including recent graduates from nearby post-secondary institutions including the [University of Waterloo](#), [Stratford](#), [Fanshawe College](#), [OIART](#), [Conestoga College](#) and [Wilfred Laurier University](#).





CASE STUDY CITY OF KINGSTON

it serves as a model for other municipalities to follow. Alex Jansen, the founder of the long running Kingston Canadian Film Festival was selected in 2018 as the founding Commissioner of the Kingston Film Office, a position he held until June of 2022. His experience as a film distributor, a film exhibitor and an adjunct professor at Queen's University fed into his strategy to develop the film and media production in the Kingston region. This included the development of a [comprehensive website](#), the creation of training and incentive programs and the promotion of the number one location in Kingston – the Kingston Penitentiary.

By 2021, the film and television sector generated more than \$5-million direct spend in Kingston on an annual basis with the film office hosting more than a dozen major productions including location shoots for *Star Trek: Discovery*, DC's *Titans*, *Reacher*, *Locke & Key* and *Mayor of Kingstown*, plus lower-budget local productions.

Jansen's advice for other municipalities is to take a "holistic approach" to developing the industry. This includes: thinking long-term by investing in training and workshops in partnership with educational institutions to inspire the next generation of filmmakers; conduct an inventory of your locations, assets and resources and ask: 'what do we have to offer that is different?'; develop an incentive for visiting productions that encourages them to offer mentorship and training to the local labour pool; offer familiarization tours to location managers and scouts; focus on developing the film and television industry in your own backyard—the visiting productions will come and go, fostering a local production industry are the seeds of future growth.

Kingston

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Not all locations present the ideal circumstances for film and television productions.
- Communities need to look at what they can feasibly offer and if and how film and television productions can create a local economic benefit.
- Unique locations and scenic backdrops and an available skilled labour market might offer a marketing advantage for Stratford, however without infrastructure such sufficient accommodation, hospitality and other resources, rolling out the welcome mat to visiting productions in the height of theatre/season will be particularly challenging.
- Added incentives either through tax credits or travel and accommodation subsidies will help only if productions can film during shoulder seasons between October and April.
- Developing a local content production industry around music, culinary arts, sports, theatre and performing arts can enhance Stratford's position in the film and television industry without putting pressure on the accommodation and hospitality sector.
- Encouraging graduates from post-secondary institutions to stay in the area to launch new creative start-ups.



CHAPTER 3

PERFORMING ARTS

Canada has a remarkable pedigree in the world of performing arts, much of it originating in the cultural hub of Stratford. Whether it's theatre, classical music, dance or opera and across our regional and cultural diversity, the arts define what it means to be Canadian. The performing arts have been an integral part of Canada's screen sector since the early days of television.

Through the decades, the Government of Canada, through the Broadcasting Act, and now through the On-Line Streaming Act, has emphasized the arts and artistic creativity as essential elements of our national character and something Canadians should see reflected on their television screens.

When people in this country first tuned into TV in the 1950s, what they saw, apart from American programming, was Canadian performing arts—music, variety, comedy, and plays adapted for the small screen. Television needed content and the creative talent involved in performing arts was ready and willing to adapt to this new medium.

Acting, lighting, sound, music, writing, scenic design, even the dramatic form itself, were all borrowed from the world of live performing arts. It was a collaborative relationship. There was a synergy between stage and screen.

As Canada became a leading exporter of television programming, that synergy extended worldwide, generating greater recognition of Canadian artists and helped fuel international touring and acclaim.

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the introduction of cable specialty channels brought audiences a wide variety of niche content. This included Bravo, a specialty channel focused on performance and dramatic programming

As a condition of license, a fund known as Bravo Fact, was established to support the creation of Canadian arts-based short films and videos. Its purpose was to stimulate interest in Canadian excellence in the arts, encourage the creation of new ways of presenting the arts on television, increase public recognition of artists and their works and provide career opportunities for emerging creators. Many people in the screen industry today got their start because of Bravo Fact.

The fund was wound up in 2017, leaving a significant gap in funding for the arts on screen and no platform on which to share that content. Today, arts programming has diminished to the point where, apart from the occasional high-profile production, it has all but disappeared from the broadcast schedule. Yet, there are still important Canadian stories to be told, diverse voices to be heard, cultures to be explored, artistic creativity to be celebrated.





Nowhere was that more evident than in Southwestern Ontario, where the performing arts play an important role in the region's economic and cultural vitality. The region boasts the highest concentration of arts organizations in one geographic area outside of a major urban centre and is home to many of this country's most prolific and acclaimed arts groups including but not limited to:

[Palace Theatre Arts Commons](#), host of London Fringe and more

[Port Stanley Festival Theatre](#)

Bluewater Summer Playhouse, Kincardine

[Centre in the Square](#), Kitchener

[Registry Theatre](#), Kitchener

[Fergus Grand Theatre](#)

[Grand Philharmonic Choir](#), Kitchener-Waterloo

[Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony](#)

[Rock the Park](#), London

[Mud Creek Bluegrass Festival](#), Parkhill

[Bluewater Borderfest](#), Sarnia

[Sunfest](#), London

[Middle River Music Festival](#)

[Riverfest Elora](#)

Although there is no data for the economic impact of the performing arts specific to Southwestern Ontario there are broader benchmarks worth reviewing. According to statistics from [CAPACOA, the Canadian Association of the Performing Arts](#), the live theatre and performing arts sector significantly contributed 78,000 jobs and \$3.6 billion to the Canadian Gross Domestic Product in 2023. In addition to direct financial contributions, the arts support a wide range of ancillary industries including tourism, hospitality and retail.

Focusing [on Ontario specifically](#), the most recent data from 2017 suggests that arts and culture products, which are more broadly defined than the data above, contribute \$27-billion annually to the provincial economy representing 3.4% of Ontario's GDP. with more than 250,000 jobs generated in the culture sector.

At a community level, it is estimated that the Stratford Festival, with over 1,500 employees and attracting more than 600-thousand visitors per year, generated [\\$276-million in economic value](#) to the city, province and country as a whole based on data collected for 2023. From a non-monetary perspective, Canada's culture industries, which includes music and performing arts, visual arts, literature and media are a dynamic force which helps shape our nation's identity and cultural footprint on the global stage.

During the pandemic, arts organizations, desperate to maintain a connection with their audiences, invested heavily in producing digital content for their websites and YouTube. However, this resulted in arts content being fragmented and siloed across hundreds of different platforms, making discoverability a major challenge.

Post-pandemic the arts continue to struggle and many arts organizations that experimented with digital content have now made it a lower priority as they focus on bringing patrons back to their venues to enjoy the in-person experience. This is an opportunity to support a re-alignment between stage and screen, a move that will help revitalize both sectors and create new opportunities for collaboration between content creators from the screen industry and the performing arts.

The Southwestern Ontario region would be one of the major beneficiaries of such a re-alignment, particularly in the arts and culture hub of Stratford, Ontario. There are many overlaps between the stage and the screen and Stratford has become a drawing card for people seeking to live in an arts-focused community. [IATSE](#), the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees, has a number of locals in Ontario that represents over 8,000 workers in Ontario. IATSE has been a major source of skilled labour for the motion picture industry as well as the performing arts sector for decades. Stratford is part of the jurisdiction of [IATSE Local 357](#) a mixed-use local that represents scenic carpenters, stagehands, technicians, wardrobe, hair and make-up, audience development, building engineers, facility workers and drivers at the Stratford Festival. A mixed-use local means that IATSE members have the skills and experience to work on both stage and screen productions.

That designation came in handy during the pandemic when the Stratford Festival accelerated the production of digital content. The theatre had already been involved in filming its main Shakespeare production each season for distribution via Cineplex and CBC, but the pandemic and the restrictions placed on live performing arts venues meant they had to adapt quickly and maintain the connection with their loyal patrons through digital content.



Simon Marsden, formerly the Director of Production at the Stratford Festival, and now an independent consultant, was instrumental in the theatre's digital content initiative which included filming several productions and launching its own digital streaming

service, StratFest@Home.



"It was an initiative that we launched quite hastily," recalls Marsden. "It wasn't in our long-term plans at all to do digital content. But we wanted to keep a connection with the audience when we shut down in 2020. Very much like any live entertainment organization which went this way, we needed to keep our presence known to the audience, so that when we eventually reopened, we weren't reminding them of who we are and having to rebuild that relationship all over again. When the pandemic restrictions were lifted, we decided to continue down the digital path. Although it's a loss leader and the revenue doesn't pay for the costs of production, it supports the marketing of our main objective, which is to encourage people to attend theatre in person."

The Stratford Festival, Marsden points out, has other attributes beneficial to the film industry including the largest costume warehouse in the country with over 50,000 pieces, a huge inventory of props and set pieces and four theatres that can be rented out during the off-season for filming. The Festival already rents out wardrobe and props to theatre and film companies and

is occasionally called upon to build sets for other theatre companies including the Canadian Opera Company.

"If Stratford were to become more of a film destination, then the Festival would certainly be an asset in terms of wardrobe and props as well as the availability of skilled local crew, which would offer significant savings from a cost perspective."

Stratford is also home base to [Stageview.TV](#), Canada's independent streaming platform of the performing arts. Launched as a pandemic project to support the [Stratford Symphony Orchestra](#) and other arts organizations in Stratford, the platform has since grown to the point where it now has approval from the Department of Canadian Heritage as an eligible tax credit platform under CAVCO, the Canadian Audio Visual Certification Office. [Stageview](#) has assembled a [Board of Advisors](#) made up of eminent Canadians from the world of business, media and the arts, who are now guiding the platform's growth strategy both in terms of content and investment. Eventually, the backers of Stageview plan on expanding an [existing warehouse](#) to create a studio to film performing arts productions. As mentioned earlier, Stageview is an offshoot of Ballinran Entertainment, which supported the research and development of this report.

The global shift from broadcast television to streaming has triggered a worldwide demand for content. As viewers give up cable television and migrate to both large and niche streaming services more production opportunities have emerged. Canadian performing arts can play an important role as a unique content genre. Canadian artists such as conductor Jordan de Souza, baritone Phillip Addis, mezzo-soprano Maria Soulis, Celtic singer, and multi-instrumentalist Loreena McKennitt and many others are finding international acclaim. Canadian theatre, dance and orchestral companies are recognized as artistic leaders yet both Canadian and international audiences have difficulty with discovering content that celebrates their achievements. The Stageview platform provides an opportunity to aggregate Canadian performing arts content, trigger new originals and make titles available to arts fans at home and abroad. With a particular focus on the US, UK, European and Australian markets, Stageview will raise the profile of Canada's rich cultural traditions.

Stageview has a specific export strategy that utilizes both a dedicated subscription app and FAST (free advertiser supported television). The service will appear

across multiple streaming platforms including Roku, LG Channels, Samsung TV Plus and others. The Stageview strategy builds upon a new successful trend in Canadian media introduced by companies such as Blue Ant and OutTV who create distinctly branded channels that are then distributed worldwide.

As a distribution solution Stageview has the capability of taking performing arts content produced in Southwestern Ontario and beyond into millions of homes around the world.

The arts ecosystem extends well beyond Stratford. Just up the road towards Lake Huron, the Blyth Festival celebrated its 50th season in 2024. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Gil Garrett, the theatre has built its reputation on presenting world premieres of original Canadian works. Garrett is a director, playwright, dramaturge, Dora Award-winning actor and theatre administrator who has worked across Canada and internationally.

"I think there are enormous possibilities for the film industry here, not necessarily relying on Hollywood productions coming in and then leaving shortly thereafter, but developing local writing, acting and technical talent that can help build our own industry. We need people who are interested in developing the possibilities of the work that's here, which many of us have dedicated entire careers to. If we want to grow the industry out here, we must also invest in the artists who are here."

"Another advantage we have is space. Compared to downtown Toronto we have an extraordinary amount of space. Everyone who comes to work for us, and we have



a lot from Toronto, always marvel at our carpentry shop where we can do a fit-up of two sets for the stage and then disassemble them, set them up again in the paint shop and paint them in situ. It's incredible."

In addition to the technical workspace, Garrett points out that Blyth also has performance spaces and rehearsal halls and a network of artists living in the area. But the key to growing the sector is sustainable year-round work.

"At Blyth, we just can't guarantee work year-round. So it's one of the challenges and that's why we always have to do shorter term contracts, which sometimes makes it harder to attract and retain people."

Blyth also has one eye (or a virtual reality headset) focused on the future. The [Blyth Festival Young Company](#) has been a place for the youth of Huron County to connect, learn and express themselves for nearly 50 years. The 2024 season programming includes workshops, summer sessions and VR experiments.

"We are in a rural setting," says Garrett, "where there are not as many opportunities for youth to find a place where they belong and can develop new skills alongside peers who share similar interests. It's about improving well-being, mental health and building positive relationships, with an artistic and theatrical environment."

"Virtual reality is quite wild, and it has that 'live-ness' that you can experience nowhere else. They've been experimenting with virtual environments and avatars and eventually we will be getting them into motion capture. We have big ambitions for the program and it's really something you wouldn't expect to be available for teens in a rural community like ours.

Blyth also supports an annual scholarship for a student who pursues post-secondary education in the arts or related disciplines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support stronger linkages between stage and screen by encouraging the development of a hub that offers hands-on experience and experimentation with new digital technologies and innovative storytelling for the screen.
- Leverage the performing arts talent that exists both on stage and behind the scenes to develop a homegrown production industry inspired and informed by the performing arts
- Develop skills development programs and workshops for theatre artists and personnel who wish to expand their training in film and television



CHAPTER 4

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Within the geographic boundaries of Southwestern Ontario, there are no fewer than a dozen post-secondary institutions that offer education in a wide variety of media arts disciplines. Each year, these institutions send hundreds of new graduates into the wider world to seek employment in the creative industries. Those who are really committed to their craft decide to uproot and move to larger cities like Toronto. Others stay in the region and adapt to find work that's available to them while others use their education as a foundation for a different career altogether.

This evidence is all anecdotal as most post-secondary institutions do not keep accurate and up-to-date data on graduate outcomes, relying instead on voluntary feedback from the graduates themselves.

Southwestern Ontario is home to the following post-secondary institutions with film, media or programs in related disciplines.

Windsor
[University of Windsor](#)
[St. Clair College](#)

London
[Fanshawe College](#)
[Western University](#)
[OIART \(Ontario Institute of Advanced Recording Technology\)](#)

Stratford
[University of Waterloo School of Interaction, Design and Business](#)

Waterloo Region
[Wilfred Laurier University](#)
[Conestoga College](#)

Guelph
[University of Guelph](#)



PERSPECTIVE

ROMY GOULEM

PROFESSOR, ADVANCED FILMMAKING, FANSHAWE COLLEGE



Romy Goulem has always had one foot in the production world and the other in education, as a professor at Fanshawe College, where he coordinates the Acting for Screen and Stage program and teaches the on-camera skills class

as well as cinematography, screenwriting and directing in the Advanced Filmmaking program. A freelance cinematographer and director since the 1980s, Romy work has focused mostly on the documentary genre but also scripted feature films, shorts, music videos and commercials. He is a graduate from the Ryerson (now Toronto Metropolitan University) School of Film and Photography.

"Our program set up our students with a silver platter in a sense. Here's everything you need to step into the industry, but you've got to take it from here. There are those who are ready and jump in right away and you can watch their careers accelerate. But you can't teach work ethic, so if you're not hungry and hardworking, the business is not for you. Some students go home after school and play video games and there are others who go home to work on their storyboards. You have to be cut out for the lifestyle, because the film industry is not nine to five, it's not Monday to Friday. You need to be passionate about it."

But he also praises those graduates who take on filmmaking as a pursuit or hobby, making the occasional short film on the side and taking on a regular well-paying job to pay the bills.

Goulem notices that a lot of graduates who are committed to pursuing a career in film and television production make the decision upon graduation to move away from London and choose to go to Toronto or Vancouver where the work opportunities are more plentiful.

"After doing this for so long, I can tell pretty much from the first semester from their attitude and work ethic who is cut out for the business and who is not. The real graduate success stories are those who have climbed the ladder of the industry. They are first camera assistants, first assistant directors, they are working on big productions, managing post-production departments, things like that. Now would they rather pay a smaller mortgage or less rent in London? I'm sure they would but you have to balance your career aspirations with your lifestyle goals."

What Goulem notices more than anything is the loyalty his school's graduates have not only to Fanshawe but to the London community. "We see that with the submissions to the Forest City Film Festival. They share their support for the Film Office which is putting London on the film radar. I'm sure many of them would move back in a heartbeat once we can build enough momentum in the industry to sustain year-round work. I think our graduates, the ones who have moved away and have gained a lot of experience are going to be a huge asset to our industry moving forward."

One of the success stories of the Advanced Filmmaking Program at Fanshawe is the internship program which places students midway through their program into jobs in the industry.

PERSPECTIVE

MARK VOGELSANG

ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED RECORDING TECHNOLOGY (OIART)



The Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology (OIART) is a private career college in London, Ontario, that trains audio engineers for a variety of careers in music production, recording arts and audio engineering. Founded in 1983, OIART

is the only college in Canada to focus exclusively on sound. The school, described as the 'Harvard of Audio Engineering', attracts students from around the world and boasts the largest full-time faculty of any audio school in Canada.

"We like to remind people that sound is the most important part of a film. Without dialogue, music or sound effects, you really have nothing," says Vogelsang, who is also a graduate of OIART. "That's why we felt it was important to set up a program devoted exclusively to audio for visual media. We accept only 68 students per year, half of them from Ontario and the rest from the U.S. and overseas. The foreign students usually return home and the ones from Canada tend to find work in the industry."

Prior to running the program at OIART, Vogelsang worked in the industry where it was sometimes hard to find new talent with audio experience. "So, I selfishly said to OIART, I would like to build a program that has all of the industry standard skills at the entry level and beyond, so I could have a place to tap into when I needed additional crew. I did the test run of it and loved it so much, I ended up running it."

OIART also teaches students how to navigate the union environment, how you become a permittee, how you approach NABET or IATSE so they can hit the ground running when they graduate.

In terms of job placement, OIART keeps a detailed record of its graduates and where they end up and most, says Vogelsang, land work in the industry. "We now get more

requests than we can handle for students. They know that we have a trustworthy program that produces trained individuals."

As for the development of London as a film location, Vogelsang is fully involved and supportive of the initiative but acknowledges that the industry still needs to develop further in order to convince OIART graduates to stay and pursue their careers in London. "We still have a gap to fill before we can convince young people to stay in London."

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop stronger industry educational collaborations between post-secondary institutions in Southwestern Ontario and the industry.
- Gain the support of multiple stakeholders including education, industry, unions, creators, performing arts, Indigenous and diverse communities to advocate for skills development programs in the region.
- Track key performance indicators to determine the job placement rates of graduates and to measure the effectiveness of current programs to meet current labour market requirements.
- Identify gaps in employment opportunities—where is the demand and what is the skills gap?
- More active program advisory committees at schools to fine-tune curriculum, internships, mentorship programs and other incentives.

CHAPTER 5

FILM FESTIVALS AND INDUSTRY EVENTS

Few people remember or realize that Southwestern Ontario was the host of the first international film festival in Canada. Starting in the 1950s and into the 1960s, the community was home to the Stratford International Film Festival. Revived in the early 1970s, it was the precursor to Toronto's Festival of Festivals (now TIFF) and was the subject of a 2016 paper by Jessica Thom, entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Stratford International Film Festival*.

SIFF, which ran from 1956-61 and again from 1971-6, was Canada's first international festival for feature films. The film festival asserted Canada's cultural presence on the world stage as part of a larger push to raise Canada's cultural profile in the aftermath of the Second World War, and built on the meteoric success of the theatre and music programs at the Stratford Festival. This paper positions SIFF within a growing body of literature that treats festivals as places of geopolitical and socioeconomic competition and underscores how the second edition of SIFF developed the concept of an audience-driven "Festival of Festivals" which the Toronto festival of the same name would appropriate in 1976.

As of 2024, there are several film festivals of note in Southwestern Ontario including:

Guelph Film Festival

The Guelph Film Festival was founded in 1984 and is one of the world's first documentary film festivals. Following its creation by the Guelph International Research Centre (GIRC) and the Development Education Program of the University of Guelph's Centre for International Programs, the festival has retained its initial mission of providing the people of Guelph with stories of global reach and local relevance. The festival is dedicated to expanding the

proliferation of voices and perspectives of all kinds through the presentation of stories that explore themes of social justice, the environment, and community building.

The Forest City Film Festival

Established in 2016, this event has been a key influencer in the development of the film industry in Southwestern Ontario. The festival, which takes place in October each year, focuses on the work of filmmakers from the region in the multiple categories of features, shorts, documentaries and short animation. There is also an industry component, the Ontario Screen Creators Conference, where experienced producers, broadcasters and funding agencies participate in panel discussions with emerging filmmakers from the region. The conference features breakfast roundtables, pitch sessions and workshops.

Windsor International Film Festival

In 2024, the Windsor International Film Festival will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. In 2019, the festival was expanded from seven days to 10 days, during which 143 films were presented at three different venues, attracting an audience of more than 40,000. It is currently billed as the second largest volunteer-run film festival in Canada.

Blue Mountain Film + Media Festival

Launched in 2022, the Blue Mountain Film Festival is a four day event taking place in May that combines screenings of top international and Canadian narrative and documentary films as well as TV and digital media screenings. Led by industry veterans and guided by an advisory board of established film industry professionals, the festival also includes professional development workshops and pitching sessions.

Grand River Film Festival

Founded in 2007 and based in Cambridge, the Grand River Film Festival (GRFF) screens documentaries, shorts, and premiere features, sharing with audiences



through Waterloo region. GRFF has both an annual non-competition festival and year-round film programs screening local, Canadian, and international films. The festival also pairs screenings with panels consisting of directors, film professionals, local interest groups and notable guest speakers.

Other Film Festivals in the Region:

- Charlie Awards Film Festival, Waterloo
- Chatham-Kent International Film Festival, Chatham
- Deep Cut Film Festival, Kitchener
- Elora Adventure Film Festival, Elora
- Forest City Youth Film Festival, London
- Kitchener Waterloo Film Festival, Waterloo
- Ontario Youth Film Festival, London
- Scenic City Film Festival, Owen Sound
- Stratford Film Festival, Stratford
- Stratford Winter Film Festival, Stratford
- Summerfolk Short Film Showcase, Owen Sound
- Amare Film Festival, Kitchener
- Broken Film Festival, Guelph
- Fable Forest Film Festival, Kitchener
- Walkerville Film Festival, Windsor
- Windsor-Essex Film Festival, Windsor

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Although these film festivals may be off the beaten path and regional in scope, they should be given more attention by the industry at large—including broadcasters, funding agencies and government.
- These festivals are where new talent is discovered and seeds are planted for future productions.
- Discoverability and exposure to audiences is a major issue in Canada and perhaps there is an opportunity to encourage more film festivals or screenings in the region.
- Film festivals are a way of celebrating productions filmed in the area, local talent and success stories. (For example, when a high-profile show is filmed in a community, host a screening for the public to attend).

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

The film and television industry is in the midst of a major transformation. The legacy broadcast industry, driven by cable and satellite distribution is diminishing and streaming has become the dominant force. The business and revenue model that has funded content production for decades is facing headwinds. Broadcasters are losing market share and ad revenue to global streamers and are reducing expenditures on commissioning original Canadian programming. The funding model in which tax credits and other funding programs such as the Canada Media Fund is out of step with market realities.

As the CRTC reviews the implementation of Bill C-11, Canada's On-Line Streaming Act, it's important to take a long-term view of the film and television production industry. There will always be a demand for great screen-based stories. How those stories are financed and distributed will evolve.

In spite of the challenges, the industry will continue to be a major economic driver around the world. [According to global data trends](#), the global film and television market which is currently estimated (2023) at over USD 285 billion is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of more than 6% per year to achieve a value of \$530-billion USD by 2030.

Ontario is well-positioned to take advantage of that growth, which will have a ripple effect across the province, including regions such as Southwestern Ontario. The explosion of streaming platforms, niche content providers and new and yet to be imagined ways for audiences to consume content will drive that growth.

Although the industry in Ontario is still rebounding from both the pandemic and the WGC and SAG-AFTRA strikes in the United States, there is an expectation that production will soon return to pre-pandemic levels. The CRTC's decision on what constitutes "Canadian Content" and the levy imposed on foreign-based streamers to fund Canadian production, will represent significant turning points in the film and television industry. Those decisions are expected within the next 12-18 months.

There is an urgent need to examine how Ontario can be better prepared for production activities that will take place in the next three to five years. Toronto, Hamilton and Northern Ontario are often at full capacity. People who work in the film and television industry are moving out of the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area because of housing, affordability and lifestyle reasons. Young people in greater numbers are choosing to live in their hometowns or smaller communities where there is a more balanced quality of life. The multicultural fabric of the province is also evolving—particularly in smaller communities and outlying regions beyond the GTA.

Anticipating growth in film and television production in Ontario should be a strategic priority. Ontario risks losing both production and creative talent to other jurisdictions unless we make the film and television production industry a province-wide endeavour that benefits all regions of Ontario. There is no argument that Toronto and Hamilton should remain the hubs and that Northern Ontario should retain its unique position. However, there is untapped potential for regions such as Southwestern Ontario to play a key role in the film and television production industry.

There are several potential strategies to encourage the growth of the film and television industry in Southwestern Ontario and other regions of the province.

INCENTIVES

- Look for opportunities and support for a broader range of incentives to encourage more film and television production in Southwestern Ontario. (Current incentives include regional production bonuses, skills development funding and tax credits)
- Collaborate with local and regional governments and tourism bodies to examine the cost/benefit of travel and accommodation subsidies.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure that skills development funding targets the film and television sector in Ontario's regions to benefit the general workforce but also emerging creators, recent graduates, and technicians and creative professionals in the performing arts sector who wish to adapt their skills. Building a future labour pool is essential to the growth of the film and television industry in Ontario's regions.
- Skills development programs and mentorships could be introduced with the support of post-secondary institutions, unions like IATSE and ACTRA as well as performing arts organizations.

MUNICIPALITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Establish a more structured relationship that allows municipalities to share information and best practices.
- Develop a film and television 'playbook' that municipalities and local governments can adapt to suit their own unique needs when crafting film and television policies and procedures.
- Engage with a location expert to inventory potential locations within the municipality and catalogue other resources within the community of potential value to a production.
- Organize a film office 'roadshow' or on-line workshop where municipalities with less experience can liaise with those with more experience in working with productions.
- Research the local creative labour market and encourage the development of a home-grown industry.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Track outcomes of graduates and share those findings with industry and policy makers.
- Form relationships with key unions (IATSE, NABET, DGC, ACTRA, WGC) and industry associations such as the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA). Building a stronger connection between post-secondary institutions and the industry will help identify education gaps, ensure that labour market trends are anticipated and that relevant jobs are available for students upon graduation.
- Encourage more mentorship, co-op, and job placement opportunities.
- Bring the industry in to speak and offer students a perspective of the industry outside of the classroom.

MARKETING SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

- Accelerate the development of a Southwestern Ontario location library that feeds into the Ontario Creates library.
- Create a marketing strategy to promote Southwestern Ontario and other Ontario regions, which would include a video and social media campaign.

We believe that municipalities, post-secondary institutions, the industry, and the Ontario government must work together to build regional equity in Ontario's film and television production industry and by doing so Southwestern Ontario will be *'Ready for Action'*.

Thanks to all of those who shared their time and contributed their insights into this research project.

Ontario Creates

Justin Cutler, Film Commissioner

Industry Associations

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Performing Arts

Simon Marsden—former Director of Production, Stratford Festival

Gil Garratt—Artistic Director, Blyth Festival

Education

Romy Goulem—Fanshawe College

Beth Gurney—Wilfrid Laurier University

Mark Vogelsang—OIART

Unions

Alistair Hepburn—Executive Director, ACTRA Toronto

Hale Reap—Business Agent, IATSE Local 828

Jayson Mosek—Business Agent, NABET 700-M Unifor

Scott Thom—Assistant Business Agent, IATSE Local 634

John Rakich—Directors Guild of Canada, Film and Television Location Manager and Scout, President Locations Managers Guild International, DGC

Municipalities

Alex Jansen—Former Film Commissioner, City of Kingston, Founder, Kingston Canadian Film Festival

Carolyn Krahn—Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives, Elgin County

Andrew Dodd—Manager, Film London, London Economic Development Corporation

Kevin Dekok—Economic Development Officer, City of Brantford

Bob Egan—Former Film and Music Officer, City of Kitchener

Devon Hogue—Business Development Consultant, Creative Industries, Invest in Hamilton

Alison Earls—former Senior Economic and Business Officer, Haldimand County

Amy Cubberly—Cultural Services Manager, Town of St. Marys

Eileen Kennedy—Economic Development Office and Film Liaison Office, Region of Durham

Geoff Brooks—Director of Infrastructure and Community Services, Municipality of Central Elgin

Jeffrey Loney—Business Development Manager, Bruce County

Marco Marino—Associate Director, Economic Development, Niagara Economic Development

Matthew Walker—Economic Development Officer, Film and Marketing, Invest Cambridge

Olga Denisova—Special Events and Filming Coordinator, County of Brant

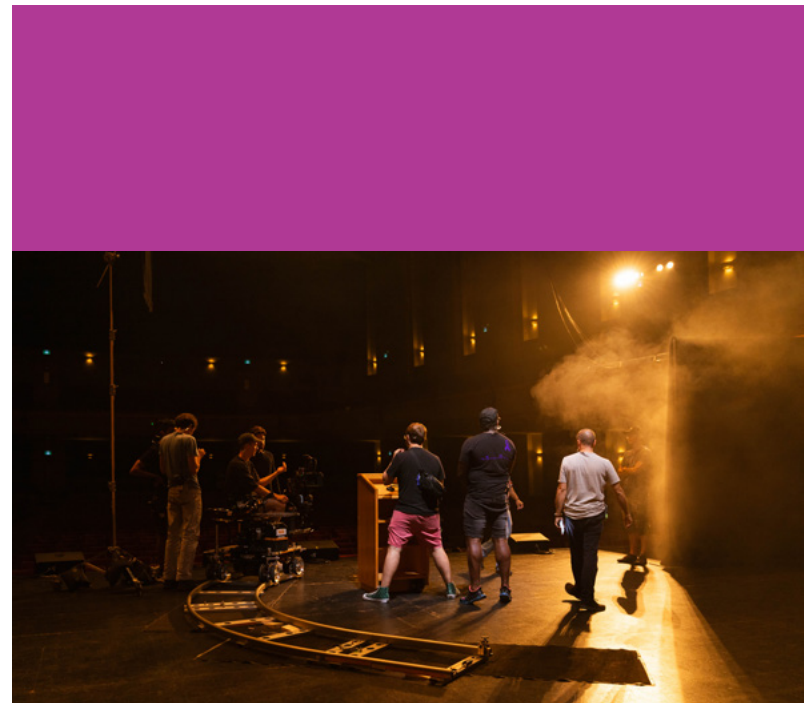
Kayla Cicman—Arts, Cultural and Heritage Office, County of Brant

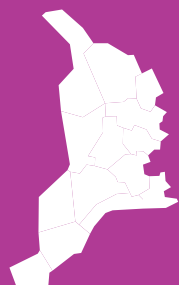
Sonya Poweska—Culture Program Specialist, City of Waterloo

Zac Gribble—Executive Director, Destination Stratford

Tim Hendry—Manager of Communications and Economic Development, The Town of the Blue Mountains

Amanda Gellman—President Windsor Centre for Film, Digital Media and the Creative Arts





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