

Planning and Economic Development Committee Deputation

3 February 2010

Re. Multimedia Film Festival of York Region/Multimedia Film Development Institute of York Region

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman. My name is Phillip Rose-Donahoe and I work for the Town of Georgina as the Curator and Manager of the town-administered village museum. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about the exciting work currently being undertaken by the Multimedia Film Development Council of York Region, of which I am a member.

As York Region continues to experience a welcomed infusion of diverse voices, identities and ideas, there is evidence of a growing desire to explore the distinct and collective experiences of the communities located within the Region's borders.

In response to the need for a forum where residents can examine how the Region has changed in recent years, the Multimedia Film Development Council of York Region was established in May of 2009. Since then, the Council has begun to organize a digital photo and film festival across York Region to showcase the vast stories of its peoples. The films to be featured at what will become an annual film festival will provide a special perspective on life in the Region during a period of extraordinary growth and adaptation.

Since first meeting, the Film Council has grown to approximately 50 members, and now includes representatives from various human service agencies, arts councils, other non-profits, regional and municipal employees, the Catholic and public school boards, York University and local residents. To date, six mayors and/or municipalities have expressed their interest in hosting the film festival.

The Town of Georgina and the Town of Markham will serve as the host municipalities for the first-ever film festival of York Region, with screening dates taking place on May 6, 7 and 8 of 2010.

Although the film festival has a particular focus on youth, it provides an opportunity for everyone from across York Region to create and submit a film for consideration. Further information about the film festival can be found at yorkregionfilmfestival.com

Beginning in 2011, the festival will expand its geographic scope to include screening dates in all or most municipalities within the Region.

The members of the Film Council come from a diversity of organizations that represent a wide cross section of the Region's population, however, we all share a belief that film and filmmaking hold an incredible potential to provide a much-needed social commentary. For this reason, in addition to organizing an annual film festival, the Film Council also

endeavours to create a region-wide film development institute to provide our communities with the opportunity to develop their capacity at storytelling.

Celebrated Canadian filmmaker, Norman Jewison, has stated that film is the literature of this generation. As such, we need to find ways to increase the media literacy of our youth and all who seek a new-media education. This is important from an educational perspective, but also because, as Richard Shiller from the Globe and Mail has recently argued, economic confidence is fuelled by accessible human-interest stories. These narratives, he suggests, are “the thought viruses whose contagion drives the economy.” (*To fix the economy use new stories*, Globe and Mail)

So, while the film festival is vital for showcasing the talents within the Region and telling those stories that might not otherwise be heard, even more critical is ensuring that the access and the capacity to make films is made readily available. The mandate of the Film Institute will therefore be to function as a community-based learning centre that offers training and re-training opportunities for all within the Region. It will foster the development of an emerging creative class by providing a space for burgeoning filmmakers and those involved in the film industry to gain the skills necessary to enter or re-enter the workforce.

Through already-established partnerships, skills such as how to create a storyboard, make a pitch, as well as workshops on camera technology, scriptwriting, location scouting, production planning, directing, lighting and sound, editing, acting, etc. will be taught. Some of our partners and supporters towards this goal include WASTE Films and Ladies of the Lake, PACT Films, Creative Culture and Company, York University through the ABEL and Knowledge Mobilization programs, as well as their Fine Arts Department, and the public and Catholic school boards

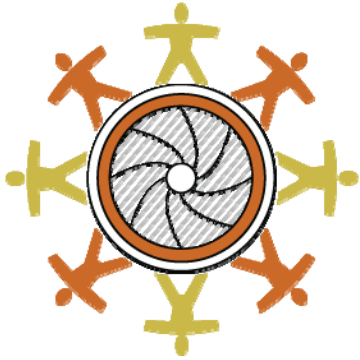
The idea of creating a film institute comes at a time when many of the municipalities across York Region are becoming increasingly aware of the advantages that a creative economy can provide to the economic welfare of our communities. As a Council, we are also critically aware of the potential of storytelling and cultural industries in general to spurn economic growth by creating jobs, building interconnections with business, attracting skilled workers, and creating spin-off industries.

As the municipalities within the Region become ever more conscious of the potential of culture to serve as a catalyst for economic growth we see more pronounced linkages being made between cultural production and economic policy. Newmarket, for example, recently published a Ten Year Cultural Master Plan and in it they recognize that a “cultural renaissance” is possible through a series of long-term cultural investments, which, they argue, can help to attract and retain a creative class, especially youth, and lead to economic diversification and development.

Other examples of this include Aurora's redevelopment of the Church Street Cultural Centre, Markham's ongoing work around cultural mapping and their efforts to provide training opportunities for those in the creative class, Whitchurch-Stouffville's construction of a new museum visitor centre, just to name a few. Each of these projects is a testament to how respect for heritage, arts and culture can lend itself to the development of a strong economy.

The film institute is a great opportunity to serve our residents well since it is perfectly suited for the Region's emerging economy. It will lend itself to job training, innovation, youth retention, corporate partnerships, while also providing residents with access to highly engaging films that arouse reflection on issues of cultural diversity, our rich histories, inclusion, and our collective community identity.

On behalf of the Film Development Council, I look forward to working with the Region, as well as each of the municipalities you represent to make the film development institute a reality. I hope this brief presentation can serve as a springboard for deeper collaboration between us all and I look forward to working together as we strive to contribute to the social and economic well-being of our communities.



multimedia film festival of york region

- An annual Film Festival organized by the Multimedia Film Development Council of York Region (MFDCYR)
 - 2010 Host Municipalities: Georgina and Markham
 - 2010 Screening Dates: May 6 (school screenings), 7 and 8 (public screenings)
 - Some 2011 dates and venues already confirmed

www.yorkregionfilmfestival.com

Multimedia Film Development Institute of York Region

- Long term goal of the MFDCYR

Mandate:

- To function as a community-based learning centre that offers training and re-training opportunities for all within the Region
- To foster the development of an emerging creative class by providing a space for burgeoning filmmakers and those involved in the film industry to gain the skills necessary to enter or re-enter the workforce

Economic Development Opportunities:

- Job creation in knowledge-based industry (skilled workers)
- Growth of a creative economy and development of a creative class
 - Job training and re-training of Region's workforce
- Building of interconnections between culture and business
 - Creation of spin-off industries
 - Youth retention
- Helps to provide a marketable identity for York Region