

Stakeholders launch the Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance

BY LAUREN MALYK

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Advocating for enhanced regional tax credits and programs to develop infrastructure and skills, some of the non-profit organization's founding supporters include Ballinran Entertainment and Sim.

Screen-based content industry stakeholders in Southwestern Ontario have come together to launch a non-profit to work with funding agencies and various levels of government to provide incentives to attract productions and develop homegrown talent.

The Southwestern Ontario Film Alliance (SOFA) aims to represent the industry and the actors, directors, filmmakers, designers and technicians in the region west of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Founding supporters consist of: ACTRA Toronto, IATSE Local 357, the Forest City Film Festival in London, ON, the Toronto Writers' Collective, Sim, Sheridan College Screen Industry Research and Training Centre, Jonsworth Productions, 519 Films and Ballinran Entertainment.

Notably, SOFA is advocating for enhanced regional tax credits, subsidies to support the tourism sector, programs to develop infrastructure and skills development, a regional film office and a creative production hub, according to a press release.

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Some of the other measures mentioned by the organization include supplier Sim offering equipment to meet the needs of Stratford-based emerging filmmakers and the creation of a network to connect filmmakers, production companies, First Nations and Métis content creators. As well, it's website notes the SOFA Fund, "a super-charged crowd-funding platform" that will "reward investors and fans for supporting original voices and content creators through a unique, secure and transparent platform."

"SOFA has been in the works for some time but was accelerated because of the pandemic and the loss of jobs in the arts and culture sector," said Ballinran Entertainment president Craig Thompson in a statement. "The film and television pandemic and the loss of jobs in the arts and culture sector," said Ballinran Entertainment president Craig Thompson in a statement. "The film and television sector has a huge economic impact in Ontario and pent-up demand for content plus the impact of COVID-19 has created an urgent need to spread jobs, training and infrastructure to other areas of the province not currently benefiting from the boom in this sector."

Image: Murdoch Mysteries on-location in front of Stratford's historic City Hall

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