

Clause embodied in Report No. 12 of the Economic Development and Parks Committee, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on December 4, 5 and 6, 2001.

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Increased Security at the Toronto Water Facilities and the Impacts on the Film Industry (Various Wards)

(City Council on December 4, 5 and 6, 2001, amended this Clause by deleting from Recommendation No. (1) embodied in the joint report dated November 1, 2001, from the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, and the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services, as amended by the Economic Development and Parks Committee, the word "Councillor", and inserting in lieu thereof the words "Councillors", so that such recommendation shall now read as follows:

"(1) a sub-committee of the Film Liaison Industry Committee (FLIC) meet with City staff, the local Councillors and industry participants to discuss what accommodations can be made for future filming at Water and Wastewater facilities; and".)

The Economic Development and Parks Committee recommends the adoption of the following joint report (November 1, 2001) from the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, and the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services, subject to amending Recommendation No. (1) to read as follows:

"(1) a sub-committee of the Film Liaison Industry Committee (FLIC) meet with City staff, the local Councillor and industry participants to discuss what accommodations can be made for future filming at Water and Wastewater facilities; and":

Purpose:

To report on the enhanced security at our Water and Wastewater facilities since September 11, 2001, and the impact this has on the Film Industry in Toronto.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The cost of the enhanced security is, or will be covered by the Water and Wastewater capital program.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

(1) a sub-committee of the Film Liaison Industry Committee (FLIC) meet with City staff and industry participants to discuss what accommodations can be made for future filming at Water and Wastewater facilities; and

- (2) the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

Council at its meeting held on October 2, 3, and 4, 2001, adopted the following motion without amendment.

“WHEREAS the City of Toronto has a responsibility to ensure the safety of its potable water supply; and

WHEREAS the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department of the City of Toronto in co-operation with Works and Emergency Services Department permits large scale movie filming on the R.C. Harris plant grounds, which in the year 2000 amounted to 25 film shoots with an average span of five days of shooting per shoot and to date in 2001 there has been 22 productions of the same duration; and

WHEREAS these film shoots involve the employment of large numbers of people and the use of large equipment vehicles; and

WHEREAS film company personnel and large equipment vehicles are in close proximity to the water purification facilities and may pose a potential risk to the safety of the plant and its important function; and

WHEREAS the nearly continual filming activity has had a serious negative impact on the quality of life of the neighbouring residents on Nursewood Road and Neville Park Boulevard in Ward 32; and

WHEREAS the Nursewood Road and Neville Park Boulevard neighbourhood is not protected by the provisions of the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department’s Film Office policy of allowing no more than two film shoots annually in residential neighbourhoods;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT City Council request the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism and the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services, in co-operation, to report to the next sessions of their respective Standing Committees with a plan that will increase security at the R.C. Harris Filtration Plant and other Works and Emergency Services sites, especially with regard to movie filming occurring at the R.C. Harris plant;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism present to the Economic Development and Parks Committee a plan to limit the number of filming permits issued at the R.C. Harris Filtration Plan to greater reflect the current policy of limiting the number of film shoots in residential neighbourhoods;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the necessary provisions of Chapter 27 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code be waived to permit introduction and debate of this Notice of Motion at the meeting of Council to be held on October 2, 3 and 4, 2001.”

Comments:

Since the event of September 11, 2001, the Water and Wastewater Division has steadily increased the level of security at all of its facilities. The Division has 55 sites that are manned either full-time (24-7) or during a normal eight hour work day. The Division has hundreds of remote sites that range from water towers and reservoirs to pumping stations and valve chambers. All of these facilities provide access to varying degrees to our water distribution or sewer collection systems.

In 2000, staff of the Water and Wastewater Division of Works and Emergency Services determined that it needed to address security at the major facilities and especially at the remote unmanned sites. Some of the remote sites are located in York Region. The Department had included funding in the 2001 budget for some work related to the increased security. In conjunction with Corporate Facilities, Security Section, the Department started a detailed security audit using trained City staff that was expected to be complete by October 2001. After the event of September 11, 2001 the Department accelerated the completion of the study and immediately started to implement some of the recommendations. Given the sensitivity of the issue the Department will not be detailing the site specific security enhancements for fear of compromising them. Needless to say the Department is adding, and will continue to add, security measures as bids are awarded and contracts are let in accordance with City policy.

One of the early steps taken was the cancellation of all public tours through the four water treatment and four sewage treatment plants. Without expensive and time consuming security controls being installed inside the buildings it is easier to keep people outside the fencing or buildings. Technical tours are undertaken with key management staff present plus security when appropriate.

The issue of security during filming shoots was raised in our audit. After reviewing all the material the General Manager of Water and Wastewater made the decision not to allow any future film permits to be issued that require people, props, vehicles or equipment to be in the buildings or on the grounds of the Water and Wastewater facilities. This ban will be in effect indefinitely given the current world concern for increased security over water supplies.

While the motion approval at Council refers to the R.C. Harris plant specifically, and filming in residential neighbourhoods in general, the decision to ban filming at the Water and Wastewater facilities applies across the whole City and was done solely for security reasons.

Local film and television industry production executives are committed to taking steps to ensure the safety of the facilities that host location filming. However, there is concern about the ramifications on the industry of permanently banning filming at R.C. Harris and other Waste and Water Treatment plants. The R.C. Harris Plant is frequently used for location filming purposes. In 2001 this facility has been used by a total of 16 productions, including feature films, "Between Strangers", "Undercover Brother" and "The Tuxedo". The R.C. Harris site was a key location for each of these productions. Had this facility not been available for location filming the City's economy might have lost \$73.299 Million CAD.

Some major U.S. productions have come to Toronto expressly to film at R.C. Harris plant. In 1996, for example, NBC based its decision to film a television series pilot, "The Pretender", in Toronto due to the unique "look" of this site. In 2000 an additional two "Pretender" television movies were filmed in Toronto because the R.C. Harris setting was integral to the established plotline of the series. The Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), which routinely sends files of pictures from its locations library to studio executives in the U.S. and other countries, reports that photographs of the R.C. Harris Filtration plant are in constant demand.

Industry members of the Film Liaison Industry Committee (FLIC) report that they have recently met with high-ranking executives of various studios in Los Angeles. These production executives advise that jurisdictions globally should prepare themselves for very lean times ahead. While the Canadian dollar will remain an incentive, other issues such as U.S. reaction to "runaway production" and the elimination of Federal tax shelters compounded by the affects of the September 11, 2001 tragedy (such as the unwillingness of actors and production personnel to travel and the unknown level of patriotism that may keep U.S. production at home) suggests that it will be increasingly difficult for Toronto to compete with other jurisdictions. Members of FLIC have articulated that now more than ever they need the support of local politicians and government to maintain a reasonable level of production activity in Toronto. It is, therefore, recommended that a sub-committee of the FLIC meet with City staff and industry participants to discuss what accommodations can be made for future filming at Water and Wastewater facilities.

The Toronto Film and Television Office has taken steps to address the concerns of residents living near R.C. Harris. Further to a meeting with the R.C. Harris Public Advisory Committee (PAC), it was decided not to issue permits for filming exterior at the facility after 8:00 p.m. There is no parking under permit of production vehicles on Nursewood Road or on Queen Street East. Specific instruction is made on the location filming permit that no parking of production or crew vehicles is to take place on Nursewood Road at any time and that there be no movement of production vehicles to or from the facility between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. The Toronto Film and Television Office has enlisted the support of a Toronto Police Services to enforce permit compliance on days when location filming permits have been issued for the R.C. Harris site. The constable has reported that the majority of vehicles belong either to persons commuting from Nursewood Road to the downtown core via TTC streetcar or to members of the public visiting the R.C. Harris grounds. At present there is no signage limiting the number of hours for vehicle parking during the day on Nursewood Road Limitation signs for the purposes of monitoring vehicle parking would make parking enforcement in this area much more effective.

Conclusions:

In response to concerns for increased safety at the water facilities across the City of the Water and Wastewater Division has started the construction of, and arranging for enhanced security at all its facilities. Funding was shown in the 2001 and 2002 budgets for this work on the water facilities. A security audit was started in 2000, using trained staff from the Corporate Services Department, and that audit report has been used as the plan for implementing increased security.

Part of the enhanced security has been the elimination of public tours and filming at all the Water and Wastewater facilities across the City. This includes the grounds as well as the buildings. This ban will be in effect for an indefinite period of time.

The impact of this ban on the film industry is at present unknown, though the loss of this public building as a filming location would be detrimental to the film and television industry in the City. R.C. Harris is one of Toronto's most important filming resources, whose unique architecture has often given Toronto the edge over the many jurisdictions throughout North America vying for location filming dollars. Loss of this site as a filming location would lessen the City's attractiveness as an option for major productions and would have a negative economic impact on the film and television industry. We would like the opportunity to reassess this ban in six months.

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The Economic Development and Parks Committee also had before it during consideration of the foregoing matter a communication (November 14, 2001) from the City Clerk; advising that the Works Committee at its meeting held on November 14, 2001, recommended the adoption of the joint report (November 1, 2001) from the Commissioner of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism and the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services, respecting increased security at Toronto water facilities and the impact on the film industry.

Councillor Sandra Bussin, Ward 32 Beaches-East York appeared before the Economic Development and Parks Committee in connection with the foregoing matter.