

Organizers plowing ahead with plans to see IPM in Kawartha Lakes this fall

Bill Hodgins

If the Ontario Plowmen's Association has anything to say about it, businesses in Kawartha Lakes will still get a welcome boost in six months' time.

"At this time, we have no intentions to cancel or postpone the 2020 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo," the OPA said in statement release Tuesday afternoon.

"We will continue to follow the instructions and guidance of public health officials at all levels of government and will provide an immediate update if anything changes."

The match is scheduled to begin Oct. 14 at the Lindsay Exhibition grounds and nearby farms, running through to Oct. 17.

Losing out on the IPM this year would no doubt hurt a local economy already struggling from the impact of COVID-19.

It's been estimated that by hosting the IPM, the city could see benefit from close to \$12 million in immediate economic impact, and maybe millions more.

The IPM pegs the total economic impact for host communities at \$25 million.

In keeping with the requirements of the various levels of our government, the OPA has closed its office and two weeks ago cancelled its annual meeting and convention it had scheduled for Stratford, ON.

But at this time, the OPA staff is continuing to work on IPM 2020 planning from their home offices.

"We are following the direction of the medical experts and feel it is mandatory that we do our part to flatten the curve of COVID-19 in our world."

This year's IPM is planned for several venues near the exhibition grounds in Kawartha Lakes, but the main venue will be staged at the Lindsay Fairgrounds.

The five-day event, which typically draws more than 100,000 visitors, was last held in the city in 1992 on fields just south of Lindsay.

The IPM typically revisits regions every 20 years or so but it's been more than 25 years since it was last in Kawartha Lakes. Peterborough County hosted the event in the Keene area 13 years ago. This past year, the event was held near North Bay.

Already this week, Norwood Fair organizers announced this year's fair – scheduled for the Thanksgiving weekend this fall – will be cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns.