

Fair will be run safely, says GM, with full approval of public health - Lindsay Advocate

By Lindsay Advocate



I would like to take this opportunity to address misinformation and rumours that are circulating in our community. The board of the Lindsay Agricultural Society carefully considered whether it was prudent to proceed with the 2021 Lindsay Exhibition. We have been in consultation with the HKPR Health Unit throughout the decision process and have an approved COVID-19 Safety Plan approved by them as required by the Ontario regulations. The plan the LEX is operating under meets or exceeds all provincial regulations currently in force.

We received input from one of the doctors who led the vaccination effort in our community, he was present at the board meeting in August when the final decision to proceed was made, and he was fully supportive of the decision. Specifically, I would like to point out the following:

The LAS has been a strong supporter of the public health efforts in our community throughout the pandemic. We enabled Ross Memorial Hospital to open the drive-through COVID-19 testing centre within 48 hours of them reaching out to us. The testing centre was considered a model that other communities looked to when creating their own. As well, the mass vaccination site at the LEX Grounds administered over 62,000 vaccinations (over 23 per cent of all vaccinations given across the entire HKPR HU). It was lauded as one of the most efficient sites in the province. The Health Unit and the GOVAXX Bus will be present at certain times during the LEX to administer vaccinations.

The LEX Grounds have hosted 12 events during the pandemic under approved COVID-19 safety plans without a single documented case of transmission. We take the safety of our guests, volunteers, and staff seriously and have worked hard to provide opportunities for people in our community to experience some joy and hope by participating in activities safely.

The LEX has been spread over 10 days including two weekends to reduce the density of crowds on any given day. This is a significant stretch for our volunteer resources and resulted in a significant increase in many of our costs.

The LAS voluntarily set our capacity limits for most aspects of the LEX well below what was allowed by the provincial regulations to give extra room for social distancing.

The LEX is largely an outdoor event and the scientific evidence indicates the risk of transmission of the virus in outdoor settings is significantly lower than indoor settings.

All LAS staff and volunteers are subject to a policy that requires either full vaccination or a negative rapid screening test when they arrive on the LEX Grounds each day.

All midway workers are fully vaccinated and the midway is operating under a COVID-19 safety plan that involves increased cleaning, more space between rides, and a restructuring of the ride pass system to reduce the congregation of crowds in the midway.

The LAS voluntarily decided to not to license the James Barker Concert and the Lions Club voluntarily decided not to host the beer tent at the LEX out of an abundance of caution. Both are permitted under provincial regulations and would have been approved by the HKPR Health Unit. Both organizations are forgoing significant revenue but placed the safety of the community first.

The announcement of the proof of vaccination policy on September 1st was vague with respect to the LEX and didn't contain enough information for Public Health to give us specific guidance on how the regulations would apply. Our initial communications to the public and ticket purchasing policy were set to ensure that we communicated the strictest potential impact of the regulations. Once the province released the full regulations on September 14th, we met with Public Health and have implemented a proof of vaccination policy for entry into the Commonwell Exhibition Building in compliance with the provincial regulations. The provincial regulations do not require proof of vaccination for outdoor areas.

Masks will be required indoors, when watching the main events on the grandstand, and at the James Barker Band concert per provincial regulations.

The demolition derby organizer has hosted 6 derbies during the pandemic with crowds larger than what we are allowing at the LEX without a single case of transmission linked to their events.

I am inviting people to attend the Lindsay Ex and celebrate our community, knowing that we are following the guidance of our local public health officials and the provincial regulations to make it a safe event and reduce the risk of transmission. I would ask all guests to respect the rules that have been put in place

for your safety. The LAS volunteers and staff have worked hard under trying circumstances to create this event for our community. If you are uncomfortable being in large crowds or object to the policies that are in place, I would request that you skip the LEX this year and know that we will welcome you back when fewer restrictions are required to ensure your safety.

–Harry Stoddart, general manager, Lindsay Agricultural Society