

Fundraisers are gearing up to save the agricultural museum

IT'S BEEN BUSINESS, not quite as usual, at the Ontario Agricultural Museum this season. With half the staff laid off in May and the museum running on a reduced schedule, employees are anxious about the future and their place in it, said general manager John Wiley.

If alternate funding is not secured by March 31, 1997 the museum will close. Last fall the Ontario government announced it was pulling its funding. A committee has been struck to try to re-engineer the operation and find alternate financial support.

Everyone is confident something will be happening here," said Mr. Wiley. "There is tremendous support from right across the province."

The committee is working on a fall festival as a fundraiser for the museum — it is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 14.

Despite cutbacks Mr. Wiley said attendance this year has been good. "Attendance is going quite well. On individual days or for specific events we are ahead of last year but overall it has been down because we're open fewer days," said Mr. Wiley. "On an individual event basis we are quite pleased."

The Sept. 14 fundraiser, a full day of farm and craft demonstrations, activities and entertainment will take place between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. with tickets at \$35 per person. Tickets to the event include a \$20 tax receipt and a beef on a bun lunch.

"We no longer clear the land with an axe and we're not going to clear a way to preserve a museum by just talking about it," said George Underwood, chair of Ontario's Rural Heritage Preservation Committee.

At the festival there will be draft horses doing field work, threshing demonstrations, a farm toy show and sale, open hearth cooking, clog and line dancing, antique tractors, steam and gas engines in operation, old time baseball, an antique car display, spinning and other events which are added almost daily.

"It's an exciting event and volunteers are responding enthusiastically — everyone is concerned that this



Photo by GRAHAM PAJNE

The Ontario Agricultural Museum's Country Quilt Fest is one of many events the area will lose if fundraising efforts for the financially-troubled Milton facility fail.

Ontario treasure not be lost," said Walt Elliot, event chair and a member of Ontario's Rural Heritage Preservation Committee.

"Our committee has done a lot of planning in the last eight months and now we're counting on the people on Ontario to show that their support for this heritage resource goes beyond best wishes," Mr. Underwood said.

• see FIGHT on page 16

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