

Niagara Regional Agricultural Society Explores Relocation of Welland Fair Grounds

To preserve local tradition and culture for years to come

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2024

WELLAND – After a unanimous vote by its Members at a Special Members Meeting called last month in accordance with the NRAS constitution, the Niagara Regional Agriculture Society (NRAS) is pleased to share that it is exploring a sale that would help them find a new home with a firm belief that it will give the NRAS the ability to preserve and protect their tradition for generations to come.

“We understand that people have been hearing things about our future, and we want to be clear that the future is bright for the NRAS. We intend to serve Niagara families for the next 171 years just as well as we have for the first 171 years” said Colin Bowman, President of the NRAS. “Our priority is making sure that our community and our next generations can continue to focus on advancing the standards of agriculture, domestic industry and rural life. The fair will always play an important role in that work.”

The public can rest assured that the fair will continue to operate at its current location for the foreseeable future and there are no plans to dissolve the NRAS.

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Quick Facts:

- The Niagara Regional Agricultural Society currently has 42 Board Members, in compliance with the NRAS constitution and the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. A.9.
- The Welland Fair has been running annually at 1100 Niagara Street in Welland since 1975 when it was relocated from Denistoun.

Background of the Sale Transaction:

- The NRAS constitution states that the Society has a responsibility to its members to be transparent with all business transactions involving the society. The Society made numerous attempts to be transparent but many of their meetings were met with interference from Michael Philpott and Ian Thompson. As a result of that interference, the Society retained the services of a lawyer to assist them with the potential sale of the property and to be certain that they were following the proper process for the sale of the property.

- As per the constitution, a Special Members Meeting was called on February 8th, 2024 at the Community Wellness Centre in Welland. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed sale of the property. The meeting was advertised in the local newspaper and all members were contacted directly to advise of the importance of attending the meeting. The NRAS also had their lawyer on hand, the realtors, a representative from OMAFRA (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs) and the Board of Directors.
- Attendance was taken at the door and a quorum was attained and confirmed by the Secretary and the OMAFRA representative. A full presentation was made by the President, Colin Bowman, the realtors and the lawyer. Each spoke about various facets of the sale and answered any questions that arose. The President advised of the current financial situation of the Society, the details of the sale, the reasons for dismissal of the Board Members and the future plans for the Society. It was NEVER the intention of the board to dissolve the Society and shut down the fair. The plan is for the Society to continue to operate and hold the fair in its current location for the foreseeable future and then re-locate to a more suitable location. After the presentation was concluded, the members were provided ballots to vote. It was a unanimous vote in favour of the sale of the property.
- After the vote was concluded the lawyers negotiated the terms of the transaction and an Agreement of Purchase and Sale was signed, the terms of which will be disclosed when the transaction is finalized.
- The Board Members who were dismissed were not dismissed due to questioning or raising concerns about the sale of the property. Their dismissal was a result of a violation of their duties owed to the Society under the constitution. There were confidential matters that needed to be presented to our Members before they were made public and the Board Members violated that duty on more than one occasion. They were given verbal and written warnings and continued to release information that was confidential and drew negative attention to the NRAS before all information and facts were collected. After consultation with the NRAS lawyer, they received a letter detailing the reason for their dismissal and they were removed from the board.
- There have been numerous articles with reports from persons who have not been involved with the day-to-day operations of the Society. These sources have no knowledge of the current membership, financial affairs or any details of the proposed sale transaction. The information in these articles have not been corroborated by the reporters or the NRAS.
- The President and board did not provide a response to the news articles as they had a responsibility to ensure that the Members of the Society had been given all the information before the public.

- The board has taken every step to protect the best interest of the Society and ensure that it continues to thrive for years to come. The board has retained professionals to assist with the sale and make sure that all proper processes have been followed under the constitution.
- Communication to the Members regarding the potential sale of the property were made in compliance with the constitution and the Act, which was the board's main focus and responsibility.
- The Board of Directors has no plans to dissolve the Society. All the steps being taken are in the best interest of the NRAS and are for the purpose of protecting its heritage and providing security for the future of the Society.