

KW Oktoberfest Inc. – COVID-19 Response

Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest, continues to closely monitor the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The health and safety of our patrons, staff, partners and the community at large are our top priorities, and we will adhere to all recommendations put forward by the government and health officials. We remain in close contact with our partners at the Province of Ontario, The Region of Waterloo, and our colleagues at other major events across the country in order to plan an appropriate path forward.

50 years of KW Oktoberfest Inc.

Founded in 1969 as a Chamber of Commerce initiative, based on the large German community and 5 clubs in Kitchener Waterloo. We are the third most recognized Festival in Canada attracted up to 700,000 people annually. We are the largest Bavarian festival in North America featuring 30 family and cultural events and operate nine main Festhallen operations. We engage 180 corporate & community partners and support local charities such as the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. We also feature the largest nationally broadcast Thanksgiving Day Parade in Canada.

Economic Impact Overview

Tourism is a key economic driver to the Province of Ontario accounting for \$34B contribution equivalent to over 4% of Provincial GDP supporting nearly 400,000 jobs. Delivering a memorable experience and value proposition is critical to attract today's travellers and secure more private sector funding.

Are most recent economic impact study conducted by Enigma Research in 2018 showed the following results:

- Total Economic Impact of \$10.2 Million with \$12.3 Million of non-local new spending.
- 29% of attendees resided outside the Region of Waterloo.
- Equivalent of 119 Full Time jobs were created.
- \$3.8 Million in Tax Revenues were generated for governments.
- \$9.5 Million local spend with \$5.0 Million to local restaurants and concessions
- 81% of respondents indicated they will return to the Festival area for dining and shopping.
- Majority of respondents rated all aspects of event favourably.
- Our Festhallen, Quality, Entertainment and National televised Parade all received the highest survey ratings.

KW Oktoberfest Inc. 2020 Planning

At this time, under the direction and guidance of the Kitchener Waterloo Oktoberfest Board of Directors, our staff continues to prepare for the 2020 festival to be held this October 9th to 17th in the Region of Waterloo. It has become clear however that the festival needs to adapt to the 2020 pandemic scenario to ensure the health and safety of all involved. Some of the events sponsored and run by KW Oktoberfest Inc. will be examined for appropriateness and we endeavour to provide our patrons and our community ample notice of changes once confirmed.

Festhallen and German Clubs

The Festhallen that activate under the KW Oktoberfest banner all run independent operations so they will determine their unique responses to the Covid-19 social distancing guidelines as provided by Waterloo Regional Health authorities. There are nine Festhallen associated with KW Oktoberfest Inc. and the German Clubs are considered the backbone of the festival by lending their German Heritage and influence to the Festival.

The purpose of the German Clubs is to provide a venue for the sharing of cultural traditions and history. Membership dues and cultural events in part support the various facilities but the bulk of the annual revenues come from rentals (weddings, parties) and for select clubs restaurant/bar services. The COVID crisis has caused a significant financial loss for all of the clubs, the extent and the long-term implications of which are still to be determined.

However, the social impact of the crisis on our memberships and German community is much more concerning. A large percentage of the senior members, who are the cultural backbone of the clubs, are too fearful to even come out to the clubs for the foreseeable future. Strides made over the last few years in re-engaging youth are adversely impacted by this unforeseen hiatus. KW Oktoberfest and German Cultural Day, which recognize the extensive contributions of German immigrants to the area, if not taking place in 2020 will be very difficult to re-establish in 2021.

KW Oktoberfest provides the marketing and infrastructure support for these German clubs and funding to support the long-term survival of these cultural centres which are part of the fabric of our community – our spiritual and cultural health is required.

Affects of COVID-19

The 2020 KW Oktoberfest Festival will be severely impacted financially due to the social distancing limitations placed by Provincial Public Health. Our plan for 2020 is to provide a few Oktoberfest signature events virtually (TV Broadcast and Social Media) as well as limited live events (as appropriate) highlighting various Oktoberfest programs to ensure our brand remains alive in the minds of our patrons.

We understand the path forward beyond this year remains difficult for all our partners – internally as well as both in the public and private sectors. In order to eliminate the financial stress, we have significantly reduced our costs to reflect the challenges of the future festivals.

Our Requirements

Our immediate and short-term requirements are financial, both from an in-kind and direct cash infusion perspective. We will require predictable financial support for two to four years from all levels of government to offset the challenges of re-establishing our festival. The current year's Celebrate Grant provides this immediate need and we are thankful to the Provincial Government for this support. The authenticity that KW Oktoberfest is known for is the cornerstone of our offerings. This financial support will allow for the continuation of the musical entertainment, authentic dance performances and general feeling of what we call "Gemütlichkeit" or "Feeling of well-being."

About Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest

Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest is Canada's Greatest Bavarian Festival. The not-for-profit organization was founded in 1969 by a group of volunteers committed to contributing to the social and economic vitality of Kitchener and Waterloo, Canada. Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest annually provides \$22.5 million of economic benefit to the community, while not-for-profit organizations associated with the festival raise funds each year for their causes. Hosted in the twin cities because of the strong German heritage, Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest celebrates German food, music, fashion, and more! The nine-day festival runs every October and is operated by over 400 volunteers, support staff as well as 1,300 community and service club volunteers. Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest is one of the top three most recognized event brands in Canada. For more information visit www.oktoberfest.ca.

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