

# Mono gives support to plowing match and expo in Dufferin

By **JAMES MATTHEWS, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER**

For the first time in its 110 years, the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo will be held in Dufferin County this year.

Bill McCutcheon, co-chair of the event organizing committee, and Gord Gallagher, the co-chair of the tented city, asked Mono council on Mar. 14 for some helping hands to put on the event for Sept. 19-23 in Amaranth, near Bowling Green, between Orangeville and Grand Valley.

The initial request included a \$20,000 interest-free loan. But Gallagher said Dufferin County already took care of that.

There was still a need for assistance to install a security snow fence around the 80-acre tent city and RV park and provide a truck and crew of two for a day to help install this fence.

Organizers have all the fencing and the poles. They just need equipment and crew to install it, he said.

"That is our only ask at this point," Gallagher said.

Mayor John Creelman said the request is reasonable and fair.

"We'll do our very best to give you as much assistance as we possibly can," Creelman said. "You can rest assured that we'll address it."

It will be the first time the 110-year-old event will be held in Dufferin County and will shine a light on local businesses and communities.

"It moves to a different county every year," Gallagher said. "It moves around the province."

And many people follow it to those locations each year.

According to the Ontario Plowman's Association, the match and expo is a five-day celebration of agriculture and rural living. There are plowing competitions, a range of activities for people of all ages, numerous opportunities to learn about agriculture, near-constant live entertainment in multiple match venues, and hundreds of vendors and exhibitors are expected.

Gallagher said as many as 70,000 to 90,000 people will take in the event over the five days.

"People who have attended the RV park in past years say the that crowd that comes there ... (have) lots of gray hairs and, by nine o'clock at night, it's pretty quiet," he said.

The daily events end at 5 p.m.

"Those people will generate about \$25-million of economic activity in the area," Gallagher said.

In fact, many accommodations in the area have already started to get bookings for the event.

"People come from all over the province for this," he said. "There is lots of benefit for tourism here.

The profit made will be shared with the community. In the past, the IPMs have donated their profits to service clubs, 4H clubs,

churches, charities, not-for-profit organizations, and local hospitals.

The total financial benefit to local service clubs and charities is expected to be over \$200,000.

"It's all distributed at the end of the year to non-profits and local charities," Gallagher said.

Deputy Mayor Fred Nix said the upper-tier council pencilled in support to the tune of \$787,000 for the matches and expo.

"I just put that on the table ... because we have a very tough budget year," Nix said.

Mayor John Creelman clarified that the organizers weren't asking for the monetary loan because of the county's support.

Nix asked if there was a policy regarding sending staff and equipment to help in such circumstances.

Michael Dunmore, the town's acting CAO and public works director, said the staff would have to be paid for their time.

"As for a policy, I am not aware of any," he said, and added that it could be a request council fulfills depending on town staff summer vacation schedules.