

Dufferin to look at hosting International Plowing Match

Written By **JASEN OBERMEYER**

Dufferin County staff is looking into the possibility of hosting the Ontario Plowmen's Association (OPA) annual International Plowing Match (IPM) and Rural Expo.

The OPA gave a presentation to council last Thursday (July 12) to ask for council's support in principle to hold an IPM in 2020 somewhere in the County.

"It's one of the largest outdoor shows in North America," said OPA President David Murphy.

The IPM is usually held for five days in September, and attracts some 80,000 people, bringing over 500 vendors across a thousand acres of tents, parking lots and plowing.

"It brings a lot of money into the community, and it brings a lot of history to the community," said Mr. Murphy. This year's expo will be the organization's 101st.

Kathy Lasby, OPA's executive director, noted that it is "not surprising" that agriculture is the number one economic drive in Dufferin, the expo further adding to that drive as local companies and organizations can showcase their products and services. "We're a huge event, but we're one of the safest events in the province."

She added that across two years, the host communities had over \$50-million in positive economic impact by tourists and event operations, with 58 per cent of visitors traveling more than 40 kilometers to the event.

"It's beyond the scope of anything we've seen here in Dufferin," said Amaranth Mayor Don McIver, explaining that he's been to several IPM expos. He inquired on the potential loss of revenue for a farmer for hosting such an event.

Ms. Lasby said that within a couple of weeks after the event, the land is returned to its original condition for growing crops. "By Thanksgiving, you would never know we had a plowing match in that area—we really are a self-contained event."

She added that they would like a decision to be made as soon as possible.

Warden Paul Mills said a decision should be left to the next council, given the limited time now to do research and a study.

Council asked staff to do a study on the feasibility of hosting the event, with the report expected back in the fall.