

Tractor pull competitors have been waiting over a year to get back into action

By Rob Paul

Last year, the Albion and Bolton Agricultural Society had to make a tough call: they had to cancel the Bolton Fall Fair due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It took away one of the marquee events in Caledon that's been running for over 150 years.

Thanks to health and safety protocols, the fair is back September 23 to 26. Normally the Albion and Bolton Agricultural Society also holds a tractor pull in June that attracts thousands, but due to pandemic related circumstances over the summer, the pull has been moved to Friday night of the fair.

For veteran competitors like Robert Kolb—who doubles as a fair board member—he's chomping at the bit to get back out there after being involved in the pull for the last six years.

"I'm pretty excited because I live in Palgrave and it's the closest pull I go to all year," he said. "It's been depressing for everyone not having it. I know some people don't think it's a good idea to have it, but I think in general people are itching to get out and realistically need to get out for their own sanity. There's going to be restrictions and as long as everyone sticks to the safety restrictions there shouldn't be a problem."

Kolb, who has spent years involved in the fair; is glad they were able to pull it together this year because he's seen a trend in other local fairs coming to an end due to the impacts the pandemic has had on them.

"It's nice that our fair is actually happening," he said. "I guess people don't realize that as soon as one fair ends you spend the next year planning the next one and figuring out what worked and what didn't with new events. It's been a sitting and waiting game trying to see if it would be able to happen and because we own all the buildings, we still had bills to pay. Last year we didn't have the tractor pull or fair, but we still had to pay the bills. They're expensive and we've been asked why we're doing it this year, well, at the end of the day we have to. I know numerous places that might not have another fair because they don't have the financial ability to do it anymore, it's sad. Some towns just aren't fair towns and don't get the support they used to which makes it tougher. But if all these fairs disappear, I think it's a bad thing for communities."

The fair is an important part of Caledon's identity, he says, and the pull is one of the biggest attractions every year, and that's why Kolb is energized to have it back, not just for himself as a competitor, but for the people who make the trip to Bolton to watch it.

"It's very important we're doing it," he said. "I got to pulls all over southern Ontario and I think if Bolton isn't the biggest crowd, it's the second biggest I've seen. In our best year we're getting 6,000 people at it. I've met people who come from Hamilton and even further to watch the pull, people travel to come see us because it's a great event and it's one we're proud of having each year."