



## **Fact Sheet**

### **HISTORY OF THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR**

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is an experiential event that takes place in Toronto every November at Exhibition Place. The Royal is the largest indoor agricultural show and international equestrian competition in the world, showcasing Canada's best in agricultural products and technologies. From farmers to royalty, guests from all walks of life attend. In fact, members of the Canadian Royal Family have been guests of honour at the Fair in previous years, in particular Elizabeth II.

The vision to create The Royal started in 1910. Although all provinces in Canada hosted their own fairs of various genres, the theme of agriculture was lacking among all of them. The closest reflection of agricultural fairs were Ottawa's Winter Fair and the Provincial Winter Fair in Guelph, but even these events only contributed to the local improvement of livestock and agriculture. As a result, thoughts of Canada hosting a national agricultural show came into play, and by 1913, farmers and politicians launched a National Livestock and Dairy Show at Toronto's Exhibition Place, which later came to be The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

The Royal was originally meant to hold its first show in 1921, but was cancelled due to a heating system that could not be installed in time. Without the heater, the event would have been damp and cold; The Royal decided that this was not the first impression they wanted to present to the public and as such the opening date was held back until the following year. The Royal began on November 22, 1922 with an astonishing 17,000 agricultural entries and over 150,000 visitors. Now in its 86th year, The Royal continues to hold an important place in the world of agriculture and in the hearts and minds of the many participants and visitors.

#### **The great location debate**

One of the biggest challenges for the organizers of the first Royal was finding a location to house all of the livestock expected at the show including 700 horses, 800 beef cattle, 1,000 sheep and pigs and 10,000 poultry. After much debate, Toronto was settled on as the ideal location for the Fair drawing the ire and outrage of nearby Hamilton. The debate between the two cities continued for a full year, climaxing at a meeting at the Royal Connaught Hotel in Hamilton on October 28, 1919.

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In its bid, Toronto offered the Exhibition Place grounds and further promised to put up a new building budgeted at \$1 million, plus supply free heat, light and water. Hamilton put forth its bid of a free site plus a grant to be made each year of \$20,000 for 20 years to help pay for the planned buildings, and also offered free heat, light and water utilities. There was strong support on both sides, with the debate culminating with a vote. It was a tie: 18 for Hamilton to 18 for Toronto. When the final vote was cast, Toronto was awarded with The Royal.

Expansions are on the rise for The Royal, as the Fair has grown exponentially over its three quarters of a century with 330,000 people in attendance today.

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair continues to hold its originality in the fact that not only is it Canada's most popular agricultural show at the inter-provincial and national level, but unlike many other fairs that combine a number of industries, The Royal is the only fair that is 100% agriculture focused.

**For more information on The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair visit [www.royalfair.org](http://www.royalfair.org)**

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