

York Pride Fest gets Provincial boost ahead of next month's celebrations



Pride Month is just around the corner and the Provincial Government has given a boost to York Pride Festival to ensure this year's program is one to remember.

Last week at Newmarket's Riverwalk Commons, which has, in recent years, become the nerve-centre of local Pride programs, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy announced a \$20,000 grant from the Experience Ontario 2024 program to support the June initiative.

"For eight years, the York Pride Festival and Parade has played an important role in Newmarket, and across York Region for 24 years, by celebrating diversity and inclusion through active community engagement and programming," said MPP Gallagher Murphy. "I am thrilled that our government is investing in the York Pride Festival. Not only does the festival increase local tourism, but it also creates a positive and memorable experience for families and everyone attending."

These words, and, of course, the grant, were warmly greeted by Jacob Gal, long-time lead and Director of Operations for York Pride.

The Newmarket-native said the festival "showcases emerging Queer artists and allies, local businesses and community organizations.

"Expected attendance exceeds 35,000 residents and attracts 12,000 tourists, generating over \$1 million in visitor spending. Looking ahead to its 25th milestone in 2025, initiatives like the 360 Pride Experience aim to enhance the 2SLGBTQ+ experience, positioning Ontario as the premier destination for living, working, and leisure."

While next year's rainbow-hued festival celebrates its 2025 Silver Anniversary, the 2024 Festival is shaping up to be an appropriate launch for the milestone.

Among the highlights and ground-breaking firsts will be the Region's inaugural Trans March.

"This momentous occasion invites our diverse community, allies, families, and friends to join hands and hearts in solidarity," say organizers. "As we stride forward, let's embrace the spirit of unity, empowerment, and love for the members of our gender-diverse and Trans community. Everyone is not only invited but encouraged to participate, making this march a powerful testament to the strength of our collective voice."

The march will take off June 14 from Newmarket's municipal offices at 395 Mulock Drive at 2 p.m., headed towards Fairy Lake on

a 1.6 km route.

"York Pride encourages the community to spread out throughout Fairy Lake Park to support our community, community groups and partner agencies as we walk through the park for the march.?"

Also on June 14, celebration will be in the air as York Pride hosts Sparkling Night, an outdoor party that will feature live performances from nearly 20 emerging Queer and Allied artists from across Ontario. Sparkling Night will take place on Riverwalk Commons beginning at 6 p.m.

After that bright kick-off, Main Street Newmarket will be a sea of colour on Saturday, June 15, for the popular annual Pride Parade. The Parade is set to begin at 3 p.m. and entertainment will continue at Riverwalk from 10 a.m. through 10 p.m.

Organizers say this part of the program will feature live entertainment from more than 30 emerging Queer and Allied artists, hand-picked craft vendors, representation from more than 25 community organizations, and "unique food moments."

For more information on this year's Festivities, visit yorkpride.ca.

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