



WILLIAMS LAKE STAMPEDE ASSOCIATION STATEMENT ON 2020 STAMPEDE EVENT

[WILLIAMS LAKE, BC 04/09/2020] It is with a heavy heart that the Williams Lake Stampede Association Board of Directors have chosen not to hold the 2020 Williams Lake Stampede (25 – 29 June 2020). The Stampede Association holds the responsibility of putting on a world class event with all reverence and seriousness, and the realities and unpredictability of the COVID-19 situation has presented substantial challenges in our planning, preparations, and logistics.

Our deep respect for our broad Stampede family drives our decision: our sponsors and partners; our volunteers, spectators, and competitors – the WLSA wishes to shift the focus away from a large scale event that requires substantial fundraising, and take this time to move inward towards the work ahead for all of us to tend to the needs of our families and businesses. We understand the times are challenging and unprecedented – it's not business as usual out there. Rather than apply more strain in an already stressful time we wish to alleviate any additional pressure within our business community – a key partner in the success of our event. This weighed heavily upon our hearts and minds in coming to this decision, we want you to know we care deeply about the financial health and physical and mental well-being of those in our neighbourhood.

We want to ensure the integrity and safety of our event for all those who attend and we do not wish to put any person or organization in jeopardy by gathering together at Stampede Park when we are unsure it is safe to do so.

Of course, this is not the news or outcome we were expecting to deliver when we began planning last year. We have been excited to come together for another year to celebrate, to compete, and to reunite with old friends and new. We share in any disappointment you may have but, given the overpowering circumstances this virus presents to us, we are confident this is the best decision for the safety of our community.

We recognize the deep historical connections and the cultural importance our event plays locally and beyond our borders, and we are all committed to gathering together again in 2021. The way of the Cowboy, the Cowgirl, and the Cariboo-Chilcotin is strength through resiliency – we will all come out of this together. As we continue to cautiously navigate through this pandemic, the Board of Directors will be considering hosting a western style, community-minded event that supports the region rather than drawing from it – perhaps, in the Fall. We think it's vital that we stay connected with you – our Stampede family – and we will do our best to keep you updated on the possible planning and offering of such an event.

Stay safe, stay well, and stay home.

The Williams Lake Stampede Board of Directors