



Venues  
&  
Volunteers



Value  
Locally



Visitors  
Local &  
Unique

## Queens Event Strategy

RQM Event Execution Strategy

2019-2022

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**“Events create a unique energy within the communities we live allowing us to view our home from a new perspective of pride and promise”**

One of Region of Queens Municipality’s priorities in 2019-2020 is the development of a comprehensive major events strategy. Strategies are important directional documents that provide the basis for Council to earmark the required funding and staff support multiple years out and provide the public, community organizations, and businesses with our stated intentions to allow these groups to plan for the future incorporating our strategic direction.

The strategy’s overarching objective will be to positively influence economic impacts and social experiences, increase the use of RQM facilities in a responsibly fiscal manner in an effort to attract new visitors and spending to Queens County year round. This will be achieved with a focus on increasing the scope of major event activity and support initiatives for new and existing events that enhance the overall community economically and socially. Efforts to improve reporting criteria, establishing a core of event services, as well capitalizing on the promotional, branding and marketing opportunities from all events that exist will be undertaken and utilized. The goal is to have the strategy implemented beginning in January 2020 with an expectation of the core items being completed by the end of the 2021-22 fiscal year. The outcomes to be derived include positive economic and social impacts within our communities improving cultural, sport, tourism, infrastructure and volunteer opportunities.

In alignment with the framework of the Nova Scotia Events Strategy and with a goal to incorporate the themes of Nova Scotia’s Culture Action Plan, this Event Execution Strategy will define and guide the Region of Queens Municipality and its partners with purpose to ensure **“Our community is recognized as a prime destination for hosting and executing events in Nova Scotia.”**

### **Our Vision #ItsHappeningHere**

*Liverpool is recognized as a prime event hosting destination in Nova Scotia!*

### **Our Mission**

To provide *exceptional social experiences to local residents and unique visitors that drive economic benefits locally* through the provision of opportunities for sport, culture, arts, community development, and volunteer experiences *supported with required infrastructure and venue capacity.*

### **Values**

We will provide *exceptional service and experiences, be focused on exceptional standards for venue delivery, and be stakeholder driven through continuous improvement reliant on stakeholder feedback.*

In order to realize long term success this strategy must be fluid, allowing for examination frequently and retooling as necessary. This strategy will become the basis for the formation of a new municipal initiative to support events and event development in Queens. The primary method of delivery will be investments in community infrastructure and coordinated planning and execution.

Events act as a catalyst to bring people together. No matter the distance people have come, the experience of a game, event, festival or performance can tie people to a community forever.

Visitors return home to recount the stories, experiences, feelings and emotions of their visit: to family, friends and colleagues. Meetings, festivals, sport and culture events, tradeshows and conventions of all

sizes, being one-offs or frequently held, make up the fabric of what Queens is. Each contributes to our uniqueness.

Events inspire us, they offer us an opportunity to accelerate our potential by encouraging new money and investment in our community, assist in attracting new residents, create sustainable employment and feature our diversity, leave lasting legacies and raise our community profile across the province, country and the world.

Events add to our quality of life in Queens and can provide for us a realization not just of what we aspire to be but what we can or will become.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **“Events can assist in growing our economy and increasing community pride”**

Queens County is comprised of 50 unique communities spanning across our 1000 square kilometres geography dotted with rivers, lakes and islands containing 343 kilometres of coastline. We are known for our two large rivers: Mersey at 146 kilometres in length and Medway at 121 kilometres in length, both serving to connect North and South Queens and all communities in between. Queens County is home to nearly 10,500 permanent residents and hundreds of seasonal residents each summer, with the most densely populated areas of Liverpool, Milton, and Brooklyn. While our population has been decreasing over the past 20 years, there is evidence that Queens County’s population is levelling out and experiencing modest growth. This is a positive sign as new families move to the community and will be the key to our future success as our current age demographic shows a median age of 49. More young families are now choosing to live in Queens.

With a competitive tax system throughout the entire municipality, residents benefit from quality infrastructure in Liverpool, Brooklyn, Milton, and Caledonia, five volunteer fire departments, RCMP policing, nearly 200 community groups and organizations developing and maintaining community facilities and offering programs year round, large underutilized waterfront park in Liverpool and fairgrounds in Caledonia, a large cottage country on fresh water lakes, white sand beaches second to none, an artistic and cultural community that spans all areas of Queens and is well-known provincially, as well as a strong mix of accommodations numbering in excess of 300 rooms necessary for the execution of large events.

Despite the absence of an Event Strategy, residents, businesses, organizations, and volunteers in Queens County have led and executed many highly successful events over the past 5 years including: 2019 World Junior Curling Championships, 2014 Canadian Junior Curling Championships, 14 biennial Liverpool International Theatre Festivals, dozens of annual Privateer Days festivals, 29 Hank Snow Country Tributes, 2018 and 2019 Canadian AXE Throwing Championships, Memorial Auto Shows, 133 Queens County Fairs and 9 seasons at Greenfield Raceway, in addition to hundreds of music and cultural events at the historic Astor Theater and countless major championships and events across many disciplines including Liverpool Curling Club, ball fields, and Queens Place Emera Centre.

Communities across Nova Scotia are actively engaged in the events and festival business, varying in levels of commitment and execution based on people, infrastructure, and financial resources.

Tourists spent an estimated \$2.8 billion in Nova Scotia in 2018 with individual tourist numbers exceeding 2.5 million visitors. These visitors along with residents local to Nova Scotia and our surrounding communities attend many of the 550 festivals and events hosted in the province annually. Each visitation provides an opportunity to attract new money and bring people to our communities.

Sport tourism across Canada continues to be a growing innovative sector attracting participants and followers keen on spending money to attend events and have amazing experiences. The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance estimates the industry now totals approximately \$6.8 billion across Canada annually.

The 2019 World Junior Curling Championships were believed to have contributed \$1,000,000 in GDP economic activity to the province and \$600,000 in Queens County with local economic activity in Liverpool and area of in excess of \$1 million eclipsing the results of the 2014 Canadian Junior Curling Championships. These multi-week events were hosted primarily at Queens Place Emera Centre.

## **OUR OPPORTUNITY**

**“Opportunities are created when great ideas meet challenges”**

Liverpool is uniquely positioned as an events hosting hub within the Province of Nova Scotia. Accessible in under 2 hours to a population exceeding 600,000 including regional centers such as Yarmouth, Annapolis Valley and Halifax with timely access to a major transportation hub – Halifax Stanfield International Airport, Region of Queens Municipality features natural outdoor experiences such as white sand beaches, expansive rivers and lakes, forest systems as well prime community waterfront areas. Facility infrastructure is spread throughout the region in various sizes and capacity including our centerpiece Queens Place Emera Centre.

Events strengthen our Region from a health, wellness, and participation perspective. Events act as a catalyst for quality of life and become part of the reason to relocate, work, live and play here in Queens. Events provide a platform with economic and social benefits for our citizens, participants and athletes to fuel a sense of purpose and pride, driving us toward reaching our potential, and acting as incentives for our youth.

It cannot be understated what the exposure of events can bring to a community in both the short and long term. Through television, Livestream, radio, newspaper and social media, community messaging and goodwill can instantly be communicated to a global audience. Opportunities abound through event promotions executed by event rights holders and the community is often the most positive and targeted promotion of Queens and our facilities. Our volunteers’ year over year support the message that we are a prime location for hosting within the province.

It is now time to elevate our effort and capitalize on the many successes as a community we have experienced by using this events strategy as a means to leverage our strengths, while maximizing social and economic impacts.

## **OUR OBJECTIVES**

### ***To increase the number of unique visitors to Queens County***

(New money, longer stays, greater economic impacts, positive social impacts, lessen burden on municipal taxpayers)

### ***To increase the use of municipal facilities & other event ready venues***

(Traditional and non-traditional uses, new investments to enhance facilities as required, user pay events, free events, event creation, recognition of competitive landscape)

### ***To increase the opportunity to grow community engagement***

(Growth of volunteer base, enable promoters and investors to drive activity pertaining to social and culture events, increase major event attraction)

### ***To increase the exposure of Queens County***

(Attraction of business, new population, promote local infrastructure/assets, promote event facilities: structural and natural, reach global audiences and create positive media coverage)

### ***To increase community collaboration***

(Promotion of events to benefit and get buy-in from local business community, drive community pride)

## **OUR CHALLENGES**

### **“Challenges are just opportunities disguised as problems”**

Every strategy seeks to address and mitigate its challenges or shortcomings in order to provide a more sustainable and relevant product; in this case festivals and events. The following challenges are not exhaustive, but must be acknowledged publicly if we are to overcome them and any potential limitations to success that they might present.

#### **What is our Brand?**

In order to be able to attract events, we require name recognition, and that name recognition needs to be simple and easy to remember in order to trigger an emotional attachment. In the past, an ad hoc local business and event group has used the name Events Liverpool, but that group no longer exists. The name is not meant to encompass all of Queens County, but to be understandable and memorable. Therefore Events Liverpool is being proposed. This does not mean that events will not take place outside Liverpool, it is simply an attraction name the same way as Halifax is the brand for Halifax Regional Municipality and not Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford, Lower Sackville, et cetera or Halifax Regional Municipality. A brand of Events Queens County or Events Liverpool-Queens County are not clear or succinct enough. People from outside Queens County do not relate to Queens County and therefore the use of that wording will nullify the overall brand approach. No Events Liverpool committee is being proposed; it is simply a brand name.

#### **Community and Business Awareness**

The value of event hosting, perception of events, and variety of stakeholders in our communities needs to be better communicated and nurtured. From business welcoming and participating in the social aspects of events, to investing in employees and being flexible, these are all areas we must work together to improve upon. Otherwise, the community economic impacts will be minimal and lead to disenfranchisement of the business community and non-support for future events.

#### **Aging Population**

The aging population in Queens County is playing a role in our capacity to attract event bidders, investors, organizers, users and ticket buyers, and in execution of large events. We must move the needle, to encourage and inject a new level of youthful volunteerism when it fits, and leverage continued volunteers to execute events. Our demographics offer an opportunity to tailor event attraction regionally to satisfy Queens’s residents or a renewed effort to shift the focus and inject more youthful activity from away.

#### **Disengagement from Residents and Businesses**

There is no cohesive effort in the understanding of who, what, when, where and how major events should be sought out and the financial implications. Residents and business think the municipality in some cases should hire people to do these events at whatever the cost of organizing and implementing. Unfortunately, the cost of doing so is tremendous and we must find a balance of sustainable cost and the public’s expectation of fiscal responsibility. Will event acquisition or development on a major scale be strictly shoulder season or year round, and who should it benefit? And where does the Municipality draw the line in trying to motivate a private business in ways to run its operations?

### **Learning Curve has been Steep**

To measure and understand the execution and results of events hosted in Queens County will be critical to future knowledge and costs of doing so. To be competitive from a hosting cost, services, and facility perspective, we need to understand what our cost drivers are and where we can reduce costs and increase sales. We must clearly understand our place in the festival and event marketplace.

### **Limiting our Potential without Change**

Are we ready to move forward in a confident and realistic manner so we can realize our full potential? Or are we timid and wish to take a more incremental and slow pace and pass up risky ventures and opportunities? As a regional municipality should we actively lead the effort for marketing major event activity, seeking investors, providing potential bids, and responsibly financing major events? If so, we must reduce some of the current staff workload requirements and re-focus our energies on this strategy and eliminate or contract out some existing service or program provisions at an additional cost to taxpayers. When we have made this commitment, and only then, will we establish our region as a prime event execution destination in Nova Scotia.

### **Major Event Infrastructure is Limited**

Currently, our only location with major event infrastructure in place is at Queens Place Emera Centre based on facilities at expected 2019 standards, access to accommodations, indoor facilities including washrooms, ability to gate an event and restrict access, community acceptability, nearby amenities such as food, gas services and medical facilities, sufficient parking, as well as a large pool of volunteers. Queens County Fairgrounds, South Shore Regional Airport, and Privateer Park all have components of what is required to host major events, but none have the total package and each would require significant facility investments or in some cases require mitigation strategies as some components are not possible.

### **Support is required throughout Queens**

While many of the major events will be required to be held in Liverpool, it is imperative that support for such events come from throughout Queens County: east, west, north, south and central. In order to facilitate the opportunities for investment and success, infrastructure is required to be centralized in order to maximize access to the most people which is in the core area of Liverpool. However; without the support of people from outside the core area as well, major events will not be possible without significant subsidization. Therefore, it is important that we continue to support and invest in smaller communities with our Community Investment Fund with facility development for recreational and cultural development so these communities can continue to host smaller community events and see the benefits of centralizing and supporting major events.

### **One Taxpayer**

In many counties, there are multiple municipalities that can cooperate to support major infrastructure and the hosting of major events by each contributing to lessen the burden on any one municipality. We do not have that luxury in Queens and therefore we must fully fund each event unitarily. For instance, Lunenburg County has 5 municipalities, Yarmouth County has 3, and Colchester County has 4 governments. All are competitors with us for hosting major events.



## **THE STRATEGY!**

**“Strategy is the dream of what can be! Without a strategy, a plan will take you anywhere”**

The value in any strategy is contained within the actual strategy directives and their future impact on the community. The following strategies are believed to provide the most value in terms of both economic development and community support that are achievable and relevant throughout Queens. Strategies are not operational plans, but just that: strategies. If support is received for the strategy, then more detailed plans will need to be created and operationalized for implementation and action.

### **Make use of CIF**

Continue to promote and budget for event execution in the event stream of Community Investment Fund (CIF) to maximize opportunities both small and large event infrastructure throughout Queens County.

### **Rent Queens Place Emera Centre over the Option of Hosting Events**

With hosting events comes significant financial risk and in order to lessen the financial burden to taxpayers in Queens, Queens Place Emera Centre should be promoted for rent and the municipality should no longer host major concert or other events solely at its own cost or risk. Hosting events has become very competitive with numerous facilities in Nova Scotia now in the market and Queens without an alternate revenue source to subsidize events can longer compete financially without substantial subsidization.

### **Continue to Seek out Unique High Profile Events for Queens**

While the hosting of large concert events is no longer being recommended, we must continue to seek out and support large events throughout Queens where facilities exist and required infrastructure is in place, or can be put in place as part of the event budget, to continue to provide opportunities for local residents to experience unique Canadian and world class events while attracting visitors from across Canada and around the world. The Municipality will simply act as renter, facilitator and not a host.

### **Creation of an Infrastructure Legacy Fund**

All future events held at Queens Place Emera Centre hosted by the Municipality or rented to external users, shall require up to 20% of any surplus after expenses transferred into a reserve for future upgrades and improvements at the facility. This will decrease the annual operating revenues of the facility each year.

### **Work in Cooperation with Astor Theatre**

Often, Astor Theater, Liverpool, hosts musical events that could be seen as being in competition with other venues throughout Queens. Currently, discussions take place between event planners, but there is no formal decisions making mechanism for competing interests. By no longer hosting large concerts at Queens Place Emera Centre, the municipality will end this competitive process.

### **Joint Infrastructure Investments**

Convene meetings with festival and event organizers to determine if there are opportunities for investment in joint infrastructure that would benefit multiple partners and reduce operating costs to help make events more sustainable. The purchase of any infrastructure would be expected to be jointly funded from all partners with the municipal contribution no more than 50%.

### **More Support for Smaller Community-based Festivals**

Many communities throughout Queens hold their own smaller one day or weekend community events or festivals with little to no municipal financial or other support. Opportunities to support and enhance these festivals and events with municipal advice and recommendations should be explored. As we transition away from being the organizer of events, we need to consider increasing support for other events such as Canada Day in Milton and Caledonia. In the case of Liverpool an alternative may include an evening waterfront activity for Canada Day in Liverpool including music and fireworks at a manageable cost.

### **Accommodations Marketing Levy**

Many communities now are implementing marketing levies on room nights sold to tourists and accommodation users to help pay for municipal infrastructure to attract festivals and events which seek to lure these individuals to their community. As festivals and events in Queens are known to provide limited economic benefit to accommodations in Queens, a levy is not being pursued at this time.

### **Privateer Park Sound Stage**

As part of the re-development of the Liverpool Waterfront, there are proposed plans to develop a sound stage as part of the one cornerstone building on the property. To make this possible operationally and to continue with our desire to support the long-term sustainability of the Astor Theatre and other community organizations, an operational agreement with an external group like Astor Theatre Society or similar group for the management and operation of this facility should be considered.

### **Development of a Welcome Passport Program for Businesses**

The Municipality should prepare a year round passport with interested businesses to be provided to event participants that provide discounts or special offers to passport holders. The Passport would be designed and printed at the cost of the Municipality with the participating businesses offering the deals and incentives. One passport for all of Queens would be the most effective. This project could be facilitated by South Queens Chamber of Commerce and North Queens Board of Trade.

### **Development of Resources for an Event Friendly Community**

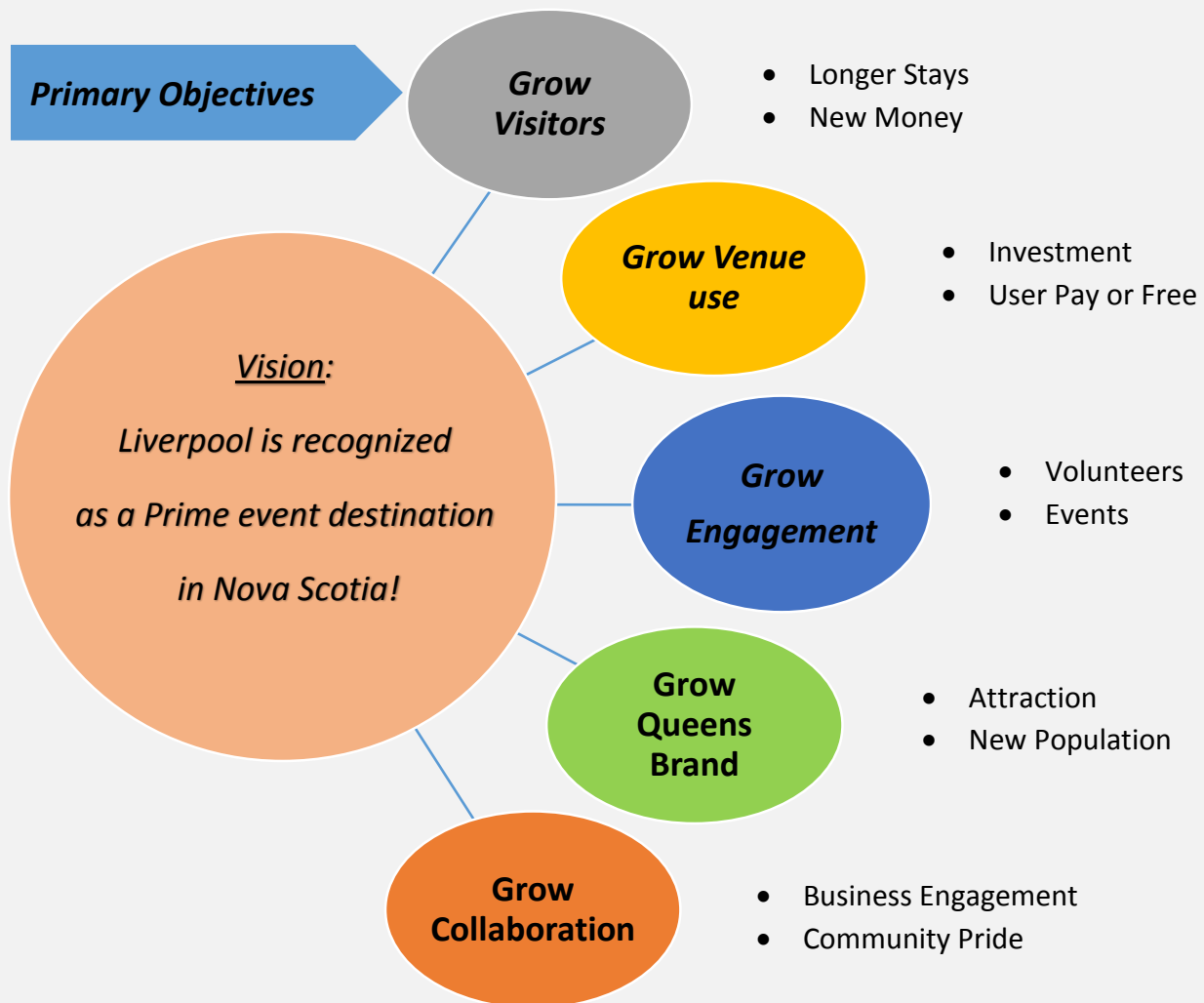
When major events take place throughout Queens, some businesses are actively engaged and other are not. There is an apparent disconnect for some businesses about how large events will generate business for their establishment, especially in non-traditional commercial operations outside food and accommodations. Therefore, resources need to be developed to educate and inform our businesses and community members what they can do to support large events and maximize impacts for the community both financially and socially.

### Creation of a Special Event Advisory Committee

In order to advance many of the initiatives in this strategy, cooperation needs to increase and in some cases competition needs to increase to strengthen all groups and agencies interested in hosting and marketing major events. Included in this committee needs to be private sector business representation to provide feedback on benefits to the commercial sector and how best to maximize community return on its investment. This Committee would be tasked with carrying out evaluations of all major events.

### Strategy Resources

Implementing this strategy will require financial and human resources over the traditional budget currently being provided. These resources would be used for meeting costs, strategy passports and brochures, development and maintenance of databases, asset inventories, pursuit of major events, bid preparations, acquisition of software, training, development of evaluation tools, et cetera. Without a major event organization taking the lead in this strategy, the need for a separate comprehensive brand and website is no longer needed.



## **EVENTS LIVERPOOL:**

### **OUR VISION**

*"Liverpool is recognized as a prime event destination in Nova Scotia"*

### **OUR MISSION**

*"To provide exceptional social experiences to local residents and unique visitors that drive economic benefits locally through the provision of opportunities for sport, culture, arts, community development and volunteer experiences supported with required infrastructure and venue capacity."*

### **OUR VALUES**

*"We will provide exceptional service and experiences, be focused on exceptional standards for venue delivery and be stakeholder driven through continuous improvement reliant on stakeholder feedback."*



## **SUMMARY**

Events inspire us, they offer us an opportunity to accelerate our potential by encouraging new money and investment in our community, assist in attracting new residents, create sustainable employment and feature our diversity, leave lasting legacies and raise our community profile across the province, country and the world.

In order to realize long term success this strategy must be fluid, allowing for examination frequently and retooling as necessary.

This strategy will become the basis for the formation of a new municipal initiative to support events and event development in Queens.