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A Message from the Partners of Riverfest Elora: A Heartfelt Goodbye After 15 Incredible Years

Elora, Ontario [Nov 18, 2025] — It is with full hearts and immeasurable sadness that we, the partners of Riverfest Elora, share the news that we have made the incredibly difficult decision to close the festival after fifteen unforgettable years.

This decision comes only after exhausting every possible path forward. For years, we have searched for ways to keep Riverfest alive: restructuring budgets, reimagining formats, and seeking partnerships that might lead to a sustainable long term business model. We have done so because this festival means everything to us—because we have seen firsthand the joy it brings, the community it strengthens, the art it inspires, and we fought to preserve that magic for as long as we could.

What began in 2009 as a small backyard fundraiser organized by Marilyn Koop blossomed into one of Ontario's most beloved independent music festivals—a testament to what a passionate community can build together. Over the years, Riverfest Elora evolved into an impressive three-day event with multiple stages, showcasing 50+ artists, acclaimed headliners, and a small but dedicated staff team supported by over 600 extraordinary volunteers. The festival became award-worthy, deeply cherished, and an integral part of Elora's cultural identity.

But the economic reality has become impossible to ignore. The reality is that Riverfest Elora has turned only modest profits a handful of times in its 15-year history, and none in recent years. Since 2023, expenses have grown and vastly outpaced revenues, leading to losses of more than \$1.2 million over three short seasons. Despite our best efforts, and even after having one of our most operationally-successful seasons in 2025, the gap between what it costs to deliver a world-class festival experience and what is financially viable has grown unbridgeably wide. Our revenues from ticket sales and attendance are simply not able to offset the escalating production costs, and sponsorship—once a reliable pillar of support for independent festivals—has steadily waned amid broader industry and economic pressures.

Continuing to operate an unsustainable model would only deepen that burden beyond what we can responsibly bear. Sadly, this is not an isolated circumstance. Festivals across the country are facing these same pressures, with many struggling to survive in a rapidly shifting economic and cultural landscape.

To our staff team: We owe a debt of gratitude that words cannot fully express. You have given your hearts, your expertise, your creativity, and your unrelenting grit to this festival. You've worked late nights, braved storms, and poured yourselves into every detail—from booking artists to building site maps to ensuring guests felt the magic that makes Riverfest unlike any other. Your professionalism and compassion in guiding us through this closure process embody what Riverfest has always stood for: care, respect, and community.

To our volunteers: Your passion, generosity, and unwavering pride have always been the very soul of Riverfest. You are remarkable humans who have given your hands, your hearts, and countless hours to this festival—you have been, without question, the lifeblood of Riverfest. Your generosity, spirit, and unwavering pride didn't just support this festival; you built it, nurtured it, and lifted it higher every single year.



To the artists: Thank you for gracing our stages, trusting us with your talent, and bringing your magic to Elora. Your involvement elevated the festival, and helped shape its identity and recognition within Canada's cultural landscape.

To our community and supporters: Thank you for standing beside us, believing in us, and cheering us on, year after year, rain or shine.

This is not the ending any of us hoped for, but we take comfort in knowing what we created together cannot be undone. Riverfest Elora was never just a weekend in August—it was a movement of people who believed in something beautiful.

As we begin the process of winding things down, our staff will remain onboard to ensure a thoughtful and respectful transition. For those who purchased their Early Bird tickets for 2026, we will be in touch shortly with details about the refund process. We ask for your patience and compassion as we navigate this difficult and emotional chapter.

Though Riverfest is coming to a close, its spirit will carry on—in every friendship forged, every song that drifted across the river, and every joyful memory that will forever live in our hearts. We invite you to share those memories with us using **#RiverfestElora** so that this story continues to be told, even as one chapter ends.

From the depths of our hearts, thank you for fifteen extraordinary years.

— Riverfest Elora

Jason Ashdown, Jon Ralston, and Shawn Watters