

DUFFERING RURAL HERITAGE COMMUNITY CENTRE – VISION STORY

Original Vision: In 1913 Acton was a booming town, home to the biggest tanning operation in the British Empire. That's when a group of citizens came together and organized the first Acton Agricultural Society Fall Fair in Prospect Park. An instant success, it has continued uninterrupted through two World Wars, the Depression, and the closing of the tannery in 1986. With each passing year it became a more important event in the life of the community.

For a number of years the Fair used the army drill shed located in Prospect Park, until it was replaced by a new arena in 1929. For the next 72 years this building would house all the Fair's indoor activities. Fair Queens would be crowned; homecrafts, preserves and baking were judged; entertainment enjoyed; gossip shared and acquaintances renewed - all under the sweeping arches of the arena roof.

Since 1998, the Agricultural Society has made-do with large tents to house the hundreds of exhibits and juried homecraft entries submitted every year. While it was a great display of volunteer effort and community spirit, the dozens of people and hundreds of person hours it takes to erect and take down the tents could be put to much better use in other ways and using tents presented difficulties with security and weather.

Strategies & Resources:

Following a professional feasibility study, the Acton Agricultural Society agreed to spearhead a building project that benefits the entire community and raised funds, loans, donations, and brought together volunteers to construct a multi-use facility in Prospect Park in Acton.

Achievements:

The new building gives the Fair a permanent home. It will be the centre of many activities during the Fair and will provide meeting space and storage all year round for the Fair. It also provides field space for many sports groups, and meeting space for community and business groups.