

Cirque du Soleil to offer economic boost

BY MARIO TONEGUZZI, CALGARY HERALD SEPTEMBER 3, 2010

Presented By:



Randy Williams expects plenty of spinoff benefits from Cirque du Soleil.

Photograph by: Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald

The comic fantasy Kooza, a Cirque du Soleil production, will add to Calgary's growing reputation as an artistic centre in Western Canada.

But the flamboyant show will also add to the city's bottom line as an example of the events Calgary can host to generate more tourism revenue.

Randy Williams, president and CEO of Tourism Calgary, said the production, which begins Sept. 16 and runs for several weeks into October under the Big Top at Stampede Park, will have a strong economic benefit for Calgary.

"It's what creates demand for travel to a destination," said Williams. "If you don't have events, then you don't have an urgency to travel to a destination. So that's what Cirque du Soleil provides."

Kooza is the first major event promoted through a partnership between Tourism Calgary and the Calgary Hotel Association's Destination Marketing Fund that seeks out big-time attractions and events to market regionally and nationally. Promotion and ticket packages are being offered through visitcalgary.com.

Tourism Calgary estimates there will be \$1.7 million in direct spending by Cirque for the production. About 125 people locally will be hired before, during and after Kooza. A total of about 6,500 room nights will be booked for Kooza from staff and tourists.

The hotel association estimates another \$600,000 of spending in the local economy by tourists.

Calgary will always have its main tourist attractions, such as the Stampede, the Calgary Tower, Banff, the mountains and a variety of other places, but bringing in major events is now a push by the tourism industry to generate more visitors.

"That's where our focus is going to be in the next few years," said Williams.

"The mountains are always there. But events and things like (Cirque du Soleil) create urgency to come to the destination."

The Tim Hortons Brier and the Grey Cup in 2009 highlight the potential for economic spinoffs in Calgary for future events.

The total net economic activity generated by the Brier was \$9.4 million throughout Alberta, with \$5.2 million occurring in Calgary.

The total net economic activity generated by the Grey Cup was \$39.5 million throughout the province, with \$28.4 million in the city.

Joseph Clohessy, president of the Calgary Hotel Association, said the partnership with Tourism Calgary will have a positive impact, particularly on weekends, for the hotel industry.

Each year about 4.5 million visitors come to the city and the tourism industry generates over \$1 billion to the local economy.

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