

HISTORY

The Winter Festival of Lights attracts visitors to Niagara Falls from across Ontario, Canada, the United States and beyond, as well as the thousands of people who call the Niagara Region home.

From humble beginnings in 1983, the Winter Festival of Lights continues to enchant and delight the many wintertime visitors to Niagara Falls, Ontario. In its inaugural year, approximately 250,000 people and 35 motor coaches visited the Winter Festival of Lights. Since then, the celebration has grown tremendously with attendance now over 1.35 million visitors and 1,090 motor coaches.

The success of the Niagara Falls, NY Festival of Lights, which began in 1981, inspired the Niagara Falls Canada Visitor and Convention Bureau (now Niagara Falls Tourism), the City of Niagara Falls, the Niagara Parks Commission and numerous local businesses and community organizations to band together to create a similar event. Unfortunately, the Niagara Falls, NY event was eventually discontinued. Luckily, the Niagara Falls, Ontario Winter Festival of Lights has flourished in leaps and bounds.

In 1992, the Winter Festival of Lights and Disney Canada Inc. joined forces to introduce the *Enchantment of Disney*® displays located in Queen Victoria Park at the base of Murray Hill. These have quickly become the most recognized of all the Festival's displays.

Over the past several years, the Winter Festival of Lights has invested nearly \$700,000 on new illuminations in anticipation of our 25th Anniversary celebrations this year.

Festival's tremendous growth continues to have a positive impact on the local economy. Thanks to its continued success, the tourism season has been extended into the winter months. In fact, the Winter Festival of Lights was recognized in the 2003 Festivals and Events Ontario Economic Impact Survey as having the largest economic impact (\$60+ million) of all festivals in Ontario. With the level of increased business activity in what years ago used to be the 'off season', the Winter Festival of Lights has directly contributed to longer and busier months for the tourism industry and the winter employment of many local residents.

