MEDIA RELEASE
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Auf Wiedersehen to the Polka King!

September 16, 2026 – KITCHENER, ON – Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest (KWO) invites the community to celebrate Canada's Polka King, Walter Ostanek, as he makes his final Oktoberfest appearance at this year's Willkommen Platz, October 9–11 in downtown Kitchener.

Walter Ostanek is one of the country's most celebrated polka musicians. Born in Quebec and raised in Ontario, he formed the Walter Ostanek Band in 1957 and went on to record more than 50 albums, earn numerous Grammy nominations and won three Grammy Awards throughout his distinguished career. Known for his energetic accordion playing and lively Slovenian-style polka music, Ostanek has helped bring polka to mainstream audiences through television, radio, concert tours and performances with many well-known entertainers. His contributions to Canadian music have been recognized with induction into Canada's Walk of Fame and the Order of Canada.

For decades, Ostanek has been a featured performer and cultural ambassador for Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest, entertaining generations of attendees with traditional polkas, waltzes and Oktoberfest favorites. "At 91 years young, Walter's legacy is closely connected to our Festival," shares Tracy Van Kalsbeek, Executive Director of Canada's Greatest Bavarian Festival. "His music has become synonymous with the spirit of Oktoberfest in Waterloo Region, helping to celebrate and preserve the German heritage that is such an important part of our community. Many will remember seeing him perform at the Queensmount Arena as part of the Lions Club of Kitchener's Altes Muenchen Haus Festhalle. Through his longstanding involvement, Walter has become an enduring symbol of the Festival and its commitment to culture, music and community celebration – we will miss him!"

Own a Piece of History!

From September 25 until October 12, KWO will be hosting their Oktoberfest Cares Online Silent Auction. As a farewell tribute, Walter has donated one of his own signed accordions. More details to follow!

PHOTOS ATTACHED: Walter Ostanek with his signed accordion

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About Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest
The first Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest was celebrated in 1969 at Concordia Club in Kitchener, organized by a group of dedicated founders. The keg was tapped and history was made. Since then, Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest has developed its own traditions, becoming one of the largest Bavarian Festivals outside of Germany. Tens of thousands of visitors celebrate annually in our Festhallen, at local restaurants and by attending one of our many family and cultural events. More than just biergartens, Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest is committed to supporting the cultural, economic and social vitality of Waterloo Region, bringing millions of dollars in economic benefit to the Region each year. *Oktoberfest Cares* provides funding for charitable partners and supports Festival initiatives that enrich our community such as the Onkel Hans Food Drive and keep admission costs low or free for favourites including the Waterloo Region Women's Expo and Women of the Year celebration as well as family-friendly events like KIDtoberfest, Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Willkommen Platz. For more information visit oktoberfest.ca.

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