



The Niagara Parks Commission

Minutes of the public meeting of The Niagara Parks Commission held on Thursday, July 11, 2024 at the School of Horticulture, 2565 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6T2.

Attendance

Members:

- Chair Bob Gale
- Vice Chair Graham Coveney
- Commissioner April Cotton
- Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe (via Zoom)
- Commissioner Natasha DiCienzo
- Commissioner Jim Diodati
- Commissioner Tom Insinna
- Commissioner La Caprara
- Commissioner Wayne Redekop
- Commissioner Ted Salci
- Commissioner Erwin Wiens

Staff:

- David Adames, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary to the Commission
- Marcelo Gruosso, Chief Operating Officer
- Steve Barnhart, Senior Director, Planning Environment and Culture
- Paul Forcier, Chief of Police
- Chris Giles, Senior Manager, Communications and Marketing
- Laura Pingue, Director of Finance/Controller
- Janice Spino, Chief Human Resources Officer
- Katy Wassenaar, Manager, Public Affairs
- Darla Jones, Executive Assistant to the Chair and CEO/Recording Secretary

1. Call to Order

Chair Gale called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Approval of Agenda

Chair Gale moved requested that agenda item 5 – Items from Property and Infrastructure Committee be moved to follow agenda item 3 – Presentations.

The following motion was moved by Commissioner Insinna and seconded by Commissioner Diodati:

That the agenda be approved as amended.

Carried.

4. Land Acknowledgement

Chair Gale provided the following land acknowledgement:

The Niagara Parks Commission wishes to acknowledge and honour the lands along the Niagara River corridor as the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. In both spirit and partnership, we recognize and thank the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabek, the Neutral Nation, and all who provided stewardship of these lands over millennia. Recognition of the contributions of Indigenous peoples is consistent with our commitment to making the promise of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and play here and thank all those who have served and continue to serve as caretakers of this special place.

5. Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and provided the following remarks:

- To begin our meeting, I'd like to officially introduce our Minister, the Honourable Stan Cho, of the newly formed Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.
- We are so pleased that you were able to join us this morning at our second public Commission meeting since the pandemic.
- Minister Cho serves as Member of Provincial Parliament for Willowdale and is a former Associate Minister of Transportation. He is also very familiar with Niagara and Niagara Parks.
- I have had the pleasure of meeting Minister Cho many times over the years and I know he will be a fantastic advocate for Niagara's tourism industry in his new role.
- I'd also like to recognize that this is the first Minister in over a decade to attend one of our meetings in person. Minister Cho will be delivering remarks and then he'll need to depart the meeting for another engagement – thank you, Stan for taking the time to attend this morning.
- Before I invite Minister Cho to speak, I'd also like to recognize Mory DiMaurizio from Niagara City Cruises and Tim Parker from Niagara Adventure Excursions (two of Niagara Parks' largest tenants) who are in attendance this morning.
- And now, please join me in welcoming the Honourable Stan Cho.

The Honourable Stan Cho, Minister of Tourism Culture and Gaming, delivered remarks from the podium. Following Minister Cho's remarks, Chair Gale thanked the Minister for attending

and there was a round of applause from all those in attendance. Minister Cho excused himself from the meeting.

Chair Gale requested that the recording secretary read aloud the names of board members and staff around the table.

Chair Gale continued his opening remarks as follows:

- As this is only our second public meeting, I will repeat a few housekeeping and protocol items for the proceedings.
- For the presentations, speakers will present their material from the podium and answer any questions from Commissioners.
- Delegations will have ten minutes to present their material and Darla will notify if speakers are approaching the time limit.
- As part of the established protocol, members of the public and media are welcome to attend and observe monthly meetings; however, they are not able to participate in the meeting. While we won't be taking questions during the meeting, we welcome anyone who has a question to submit it through our Guest Service Centre by email to info@niagaraparks.com.
- Questions will be passed along to Darla who will ensure a response is provided.
- In addition to in-person meetings, public sessions are also recorded and made available on our website, along with the presentation files and relevant reports.
- I'll now continue with my opening remarks - Looking back on the last few weeks since our last meeting, we are officially in our peak tourism season at Niagara Parks.
- Between the Canada Day long weekend and the Fourth of July holiday weekend, our visitation levels have increased across virtually all of our operations compared to prior year.
- Considering how strong last year was for Niagara Parks, this is a fantastic sign of what's to come for 2024.
- On June 18, the Niagara Escarpment Commission held their 50th anniversary celebration on the patio of Queenston Heights Restaurant – a meaningful venue choice given its location above the Escarpment and connections to the Bruce Trail.
- On June 21, we hosted the POWER of Music concert with the Niagara Jazz Festival at Oakes Garden Theatre – their signature kickoff event for their summer festival series.
- The week of June 24, the Environmental Stewardship team launched a pilot project exploring the use of goats to target invasive species at Gonder's Flats in Fort Erie.
 - This story captured a lot of attention on social media and in the news and apparently the goats were quite the overachievers – exceeding expectations for how much invasives they could consume.
- I also learned that Niagara City Cruises have been using animals for a unique purpose as well – when I was touring their facilities, I had the chance to meet the trained falcon they use to keep the seagulls away.

- On June 25, we hosted colleagues from the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, one of our sister tourism agencies. We toured several Niagara Parks sites with their staff including CEO Hollee Kew and Board Chair Bob Runciman and Board Member Pierre Santoni.
- On June 26, I greeted MPP Daisy Wai (WAY), Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility, who was visiting Niagara and took a tour of the Butterfly Conservatory – this was also the final day of our Seniors Month promotion.
- On July 1, Canada Day, we hosted a special citizenship ceremony at Queenston Heights Park. It was an honour to speak at the ceremony and congratulate the new Canadians alongside MP Tony Baldinelli, MP Chris Bittle and MPP Wayne Gates.
- On July 2, the Amazing Race Canada premiered their new season on CTV, featuring a number of Niagara Parks and Niagara Falls venues.
- I hope all Commissioners had a chance to tune in – this was excellent representation for Niagara Parks – our sites looked incredible, especially the power station.
- On July 5, we hosted the annual Battle of Chippawa memorial ceremony to honour and remember those who fought during this historic battle 210 years ago.
- It was fantastic to see how excited the seniors dressed in red coats were to fire off the canon for the demonstration. They were so excited that they asked me if they could do it a second time and I said, absolutely! They were thrilled and I am happy to report there were no serious injuries.
- Today, we will officially be announcing the changes coming into effect regarding the WEGO Bus System.
- As approved at our June 13 meeting, with the current WEGO agreement expiring next month, Niagara Parks will be taking over the operation of the WEGO Blue Line, effective September 3, 2024.
- This will ensure that all visitors and residents continue to have access to a seamless and integrated public transportation system to connect them to the key tourism areas across the destination.
- This is a critical guest amenity and we look forward to continuing to work closely with stakeholders and tourism operators across the destination to provide the best possible experience for all when visiting Niagara Falls.
- We will be issuing a media release on these changes immediately following the meeting this morning.

6. Delegation Requests

6.1 Crime Stoppers Niagara

Ernie Sibbett, Chair, and Brooklyn Mercer, Administrative Coordinator from Crime Stoppers Niagara provided a presentation respecting Crime Stoppers Niagara including the Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign

Crime Stoppers Niagara Update Memo 2021-19

Staff were asked to look into the option of including the anti-human trafficking awareness campaign posters on WEGO buses.

The following motion was moved by Commissioner Salci and seconded by Commissioner La Caprara:

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the initiative with Crime Stoppers Niagara to be part of the Anti-Human Trafficking Communications and Awareness Campaign.

Carried.

The Crime Stoppers Niagara delegation was excused themselves from the meeting.

6.2 Niagara Parks Foundation Update

Debbie Whitehouse, Chair, Niagara Parks Foundation provided an update presentation respecting Niagara Parks Foundation priority projects, recent highlights, fundraising and strategic plans. Debbie introduced Steven Pinnock, Director of Fundraising, Niagara Parks Foundation. Steven Pinnock delivered brief remarks.

7. Items from Property and Infrastructure Committee

Committee-Chair Wiens provided a brief overview of reports from the July 4, 2024 meeting of the Property and Infrastructure Committee.

It was requested that the recommendation respecting Miller's Creek Marina (Report 2024-66) be considered separately. The balance of recommendations was considered as follows:

The following motion was moved by Vice-Chair Coveney and seconded by Commissioner Diodati:

That The Niagara Parks Commission approve the recommendations as contained in Report 2024-72 Summary of Recommendations from the Property and Infrastructure Committee (save and except Report 2024-66 respecting Miller's Creek Marina) respecting the following matters:

1. Black Creek Bridge Plaque Report 2024-59
2. Parks Canada John Norton Plaque Report 2024-62
3. Muddy Run Sewage Pumping Station Easement Amending Agreement Report 2024-60
4. Capital Projects Update Presentation
5. Ringo Starr Peace and Love Sculpture: Celebration of Peace Around the World

6. Roundabout in Queenston

Carried.

7.1 Miller's Creek Marina (Report 2024-66)

The recommendations in Report 2024-66 respecting Miller's Creek Marina were separated and voted on as follows:

The following motion was moved by Vice-Chair Coveney and seconded by Commissioner Salci and seconded by Commissioner La Caprara:

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the re-allocation of \$1.1M in capital funding from the Marina Strategic Capital Project 2024/2025 program to Miller's Creek Marina improvements.
2. Approve \$60K in Repairs and Maintenance expenditures to Miller's Creek Marina.

Carried.

The following motion was moved by Commissioner La Caprara and seconded by Commissioner Salci:

That The Niagara Parks Commission

3. Approve the re-allocation of the remaining of \$3.9 M in capital funding from the Marina Strategic Capital Project 2024/2025 program to Capital Unallocated.

Carried.

Commissioner Redekop and Commissioner Insinna were opposed.

Commissioner Wiens excused himself from the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

8. Business Highlights Presentation

David Adames provided a presentation respecting Niagara Parks' Business Highlights.

The following motion was moved by Commissioner Salci and seconded by Commissioner La Caprara:

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Receive the Business Highlights Presentation for information.

Carried.

9. Items from Golf Committee

Committee-Chair La Caprara provided an overview of items from the July 3, 2024 meeting of the Golf Committee.

The following motion was moved by Commissioner Insinna and seconded by Vice-Chair Coveney:

That The Niagara Parks Commission approve the recommendations as contained in Report 2024-71 Summary of Recommendations from the Golf Committee respecting the following matters:

1. Golf Committee Draft Terms of Reference
2. Golf Operations Key Performance Indicators

Carried.

10. Information Items

10.1 Summary of Decisions – June 13, 2024 Commission Meeting

The following motion was moved by Vice-Chair Coveney and seconded by Commissioner Diodati:

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Receive Report 2024-65 Summary of Decisions from the June 13, 2024 Commission meeting for information.

Carried.

11. Other Business

- a) Bottom of Jarvis Street at the Niagara River, Fort Erie
Staff will look into ways to improve the site. This item will be added to the Property and Infrastructure Committee Follow Up Log
- b) Niagara Parks Annual Parking Pass
Staff are looking to implement the option for automatic renewal for pass holders' convenience.
- c) Tesla Walkway (Pathway between Table Rock Complex and Queen Victoria Park)
Staff will look for a temporary solution to address the lack of lighting which could create a safety concern. This item is included in next year's capital plan to be addressed.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday August 8, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at the School of Horticulture, 2565 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6T2.

Commissioner DeWolfe excused himself from the meeting (via Zoom).

13. Closed Session

13.1 Resolution to Move to Closed Session

The following motion was moved by Commissioner Diodati and seconded by Commissioner DiCienzo:

That The Niagara Parks Commission move into the Closed Session.

Carried.

The Commission moved into the Closed Session with the following persons in attendance:

Members: Chair Bob Gale
Vice Chair Graham Coveney
Commissioner April Cotton
Commissioner Natasha DiCienzo
Commissioner Jim Diodati
Commissioner Tom Insinna
Commissioner La Caprara
Commissioner Wayne Redekop
Commissioner Ted Salci

Staff: David Adames, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary to the Commission
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Bob Gale
Chair

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