

The Niagara Parks Commission

Minutes of the public meeting of The Niagara Parks Commission held on Thursday, December 12, 2024 at the School of Horticulture, 2565 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6T2.

Attendance

- Members: Chair Bob Gale
Commissioner April Cotton (virtually)
Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe (virtually)
Commissioner Natasha DiCienzo (virtually)
Commissioner Tom Insinna
Commissioner Wayne Redekop
Commissioner Ted Salci
Commissioner Erwin Wiens
- Regrets: Vice-Chair Graham Coveney
Commissioner Jim Diodati
Commissioner Dan La Caprara
- 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
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 9:03 a.m.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Approval of Agenda

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

That the agenda be approved.

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

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

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

"Welcome to our December public Commission meeting. Hopefully everyone has had a chance to check out this year's Winter Festival of Lights. If you haven't been down to Queen Victoria Park yet, there is still plenty of time and lots of excitement happening over the next few weeks. On November 16, we officially kicked things off with a celebration that was attended by over 5,000 guests. The next few weekends we hosted free family-friendly programming including concerts and performances, plus a visit from the Coca Cola Holiday Caravan. The festival has been a great success so far and we look forward to welcoming more families over the holiday season. On Friday, November 22, we were pleased to host our Minister Stan Cho along with MPP Sam Oosterhoff and James Ciancone from Society Developments/Pearle Hospitality for a special tour of Toronto Power Generating Station. That day, the Order-in-Council was officially posted signifying the government's final approval of the redevelopment project. Thank you to Commissioner Diodati for attending and representing the City of Niagara Falls as Mayor. It was a fantastic afternoon and it gave us great pride to tour the Minister through the building, you could tell he and his team are just as excited as we are. After the visit to Toronto Power, we also toured the Winter Festival of Lights and gave the Minister the opportunity to change the lights from the illumination Tower. On Sunday, November 24th, Commissioner DiCienzo attended and spoke at an event in honour of the Zonta Says No to Violence campaign at Table Rock Centre. This is an annual campaign that shines a light on the issue of gender-based violence that unfortunately, continues to impact both our own communities and those around the world. Thank you, Commissioner DiCienzo for attending. On Wednesday, November 27th, Niagara Parks hosted their staff appreciation holiday event at the Floral Showhouse. On Sunday, December 1st, I attended a special illumination ceremony for a delegation from the Consulate General

of Romania, facilitated through Minister Michael Tibollo. Last week, the Niagara Grape & Wine Festival announced the key dates and events for this year's Icewine Festival – we are pleased to host the Cool As Ice Gala at the Niagara Parks Power Station on Saturday, January 18. This week, we issued a media release about what is happening at Niagara Parks for New Year's Eve. While there will be no concert, there is still plenty of fun to enjoy including 2 fireworks displays at 8pm and midnight, a ticketed New Year's Eve dinner event at Table Rock House, plus all of the free light displays with Winter Festival of Lights. This weekend, Vice Chair Coveney will represent the Commission at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Santa Clause parade – thank you Graham for attending. As we look ahead to the holiday season, I hope everyone finds time to relax and reconnect with family and friends."

6. Approval of Draft Minutes

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the minutes dated November 14, 2024 (COMM-2024-16).

Carried.

7. Presentations

Presentation to Niagara Parks Police Inspector Chris Gallagher

Chair Gale invited Chief Forcier and Inspector Gallagher to the stage. Chief Forcier delivered the following remarks:

"Good morning, Chair Gale, Commissioners and staff. It is my pleasure this morning to introduce Inspector Chris Gallagher, who is joined today by his wife Laura, his daughters Olivia and Emma, and his son Daniel, who has proudly followed in his father's large footsteps, now serving as a police officer with the Niagara Regional Police Service. Inspector Gallagher joined the Niagara Parks Police Service in June of 1988 as a student Provincial Offences Officer while he attended the Law and Security Program at Niagara College. Chris rose through the ranks, becoming a fulltime Constable with the Service, was promoted to Sergeant where he supervised a complement of Constables and a Communicator, before joining the management team when he was promoted to the rank of Inspector in 2019. While serving as an Inspector, Chris has continued to foster the positive relationships our members enjoy with other Commission staff, our private sector partners, and members of the law enforcement and public safety communities, within the Region, the province, and across the border. Chris recruits, selects, oversees training, and mentors our Provincial Offences Officers – a farm team for policing across the province. Growing the talent within our own ranks and from which he began his own proud career."

“During his time with the Commission and the Niagara Parks Police Service, Inspector Gallagher completed a six-month secondment with NRPS Detective Services, completed the Senior Police Administrator Course in Ottawa, Ontario, numerous professional development courses through the Ontario Police College, Niagara Regional Police Service, and the Hamilton Police Service. Chris has been recognized with multiple commendations in relation to investigations through both the Niagara Parks Police Service, and the Niagara Regional Police Service. Inspector Gallagher has been, and continues to be, an active member of the community, particularly through hockey, as a mentor and coach, passing on life skills, and lessons learned, during his own time playing Junior ‘C’ hockey, (back in the day), and through his long and successful career with the Niagara Parks Police Service. Chris has been presented with previous honours, including the ‘Respect for Law’ recognition through the Niagara Falls Optimist Club, the Police Exemplary Service Medal, through the Chancellery of Honours at Rideau Hall, and the Long-Service Medal, by the Niagara Parks Commission. Today, we are here to present Inspector Gallagher, on behalf of the Commission, The Niagara Parks Commission Medal of Merit. This recognition is recommended by the Chief of the Niagara Parks Police Service, to the Commission Chair, in recognition of a member of the police service, who has engaged in a significant act of bravery or exceptional performance above self, demonstrated contributions which have truly benefited the Niagara Parks Commission, and/or the lives of others, including members of the public. During his 36 years of proud service with the Niagara Parks Commission and its Police Service, Inspector Gallagher has demonstrated all the above. As a Constable and Sergeant, he worked tirelessly to thwart the efforts of professional pickpockets, and theft from auto suspects who were targeting our visitors. Chris served as a member of our High Angle River Team, and was involved personally in several Niagara River Gorge Rescues, all with positive outcomes. As an Inspector, Chris continued to help build this specially trained team and encourage new members to take up leadership roles to ensure its sustainability. Chris doubled his efforts to foster and enhance the excellent working relationships he began earlier in his career. With Commission staff, including the Engineering Department, for road closures and the introduction of portable pedestrian safety barriers. With our Events staff, for a multitude of marathons, triathlons, commercial filming shoots, concerts, and other special events. The coordination of a multiagency emergency response plan for the Solar Eclipse - involving both local and out of town partner agencies. Chris was very accessible and approachable to our local tourism partners in the Fallsview business community. This was also true with our private sector partners, who operate quality complimenting attractions on land, on the water, and in the air. All of our partners have Chris on speed dial, and they were always ready to lend a hand to our members, any way they could. It is these and other strong personal relationships that Chris nurtured during his long career that I know he has been most proud of, and the members of the Niagara Parks Police Service, staff with the Commission, and the public we all serve, have benefitted from them along with Chris’ steady and supportive leadership.”

"I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition than Inspector Chris Gallagher and I wish to personally thank him for his career long service to the Commission as a vital partner towards staff and visitor safety. It is my privilege to submit my recommendation that Inspector Chris Gallagher be recognized with the Niagara Parks Commission - Police Medal of Merit - by Chair Bob Gale on behalf of the Commission. Thank you."

Chair Gale presented Inspector Gallagher with the Niagara Parks Commission Police Medal of Merit and invited Inspector Gallagher's wife and daughters to the stage for group photographs. Sergeant Adam Kitson was invited to deliver congratulatory remarks to Inspector Gallagher.

Inspector Gallagher delivered remarks, thanking the Commission and colleagues and expressing his gratitude which concluded the presentation. All visitors then excused themselves from the meeting.

Business Highlights

Chair Gale invited David Adames to provide a presentation respecting Niagara Parks' Business Highlights.

Staff were asked to reiterate with Pearle Hospitality that their new parking facility is to open in conjunction with the hotel and not prior to the opening.

The Commission received the Business Highlights presentation for information.

8. Item from Finance and Audit Committee

David Adames provided a brief overview of Report 2024-125 respecting "The Bridge" Food Recovery Program and the Nikola Tesla Exhibit Update.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the recommendations as contained in Report 2024-131 Summary of Recommendations from the Finance and Audit Committee respecting the following matters:
 - a) "The Bridge" Food Recovery Program (Report 2024-125)
 - b) Nikola Tesla Exhibit Update Presentation

Carried.

9. Other Business

There were no items of other business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday January 16, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the School of Horticulture, 2565 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6T2.

11. Closed Session

The Commission moved into the Closed Session at 9:46 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Members: Chair Bob Gale

Commissioner April Cotton (virtually)

Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe (virtually)

Commissioner Natasha DiCienzo (virtually)

Commissioner Tom Insinna

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

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

Bob Gale
Chair

David Adames
Chief Executive Officer/
Secretary to the Commission

Darla Jones
Executive Assistant to the Chair and
CEO/Recording Secretary

December 12, 2024