



NIAGARA
PARKS
FOUNDATION

Niagara Parks Foundation

Update from Chair Debbie Whitehouse

Presentation to Niagara Parks Commission – April 10, 2025



Niagara Parks Foundation

- Launched in April 2022
- Registered charity governed by a Board of Directors, established to support and advance stewardship initiatives of Niagara Parks
- 7-member board:
 - **Chair:** Debbie Whitehouse
 - **Vice-Chair:** Sue-Ann Ramsden
 - **Members:** Michele-Elise Burnett, Sylvie Chartrand-Rafi, Bob Gale, Blair McArthur,
 - **Treasurer/Secretary:** David Adames
 - **Special Advisors:** Robert Brooker and Robert McIlveen

Mission

Preserving the priceless nature and heritage along the Niagara River corridor for the enjoyment of the public and future generations

The Niagara Parks Foundation provides the unique opportunity for members of the public and corporations to actively contribute to one of the world's most beloved public spaces



Priority Projects of the Foundation



Tree Planting



**Children's
Garden**



**Indigenous
Programming**



**Old Fort Erie
Archaeology**



**Children's
Programming**

2023/2024

highlights

AT A GLANCE



NIAGARA
PARKS
FOUNDATION

Dufferin Islands Visitor Experience and Ecological Enhancement Initiative

- \$400,000 grant through TD Canada Bank's Ready Commitment program funded the three-year plan
- Year two was completed in 2024, highlights include:
 - Ongoing removal of invasive species
 - Installation of eight beaver cones to prevent blockages and flooding
 - Five wildlife feeding signs installed
 - 100m of shoreline restored using bio-engineering techniques
 - 5,000 native trees, shrubs and wildflowers planted
 - 2,000 trees planted along upper moraine to expand tree canopy
 - Restoration of three degraded islands
 - Working with a Landscape Architect to redesign the central picnic area



NIAGARA
PARKS
FOUNDATION

Launch of Rekindling All Our Relations Indigenous Audio Tour

- Supported by the Foundation, Indigenous Tourism Ontario and FedDev Ontario.
- Free, self-guided audio tour of the Niagara Glen, curated by Michele-Elise Burnett and audio-engineered by William Riech Jr.
- Tour blends music from renowned Indigenous artists with narratives rooted in Indigenous teachings.
- Since launching in June 2024, the audio tour has been downloaded by over 1,100 users.



Tree Planting

Soil Analysis Program through Vineland Research and Innovation Centre

- Soil samples taken from future planting sites to guide the selection of tree species to ensure optimal growing conditions.

Niagara Falls Tourism Donation for Rendez-Vous Canada

- Niagara Falls Tourism funded the planting of 1,100 trees in preparation for hosting the Rendez-Vous Canada conference in 2027
- The donation was matched by Trees for Life and 2,000 trees were planted between Dufferin Islands and Rapidsview Park.
- 25 environmental sustainability students from Brock University were recruited to assist with the planting.

Community Tree Planting Day

- On October 26, 2024, volunteers joined together to plant over 250 trees as part of a local reforestation project outside of Old Fort Erie.





NIAGARA
PARKS
FOUNDATION



TREES FOR LIFE

Trees for Life Grant \$70,000

- Niagara Parks' Toonies for Trees point-of-sale donation program has steadily grown, raising over \$40,000 in 2024.
- The Niagara Parks Foundation is grateful to receive a grant through Trees for Life that will match up to \$70,000 toward tree planting in 2025-26 (estimated 5,000 trees).
- This will help the program's impact extend even further to support tree planting at Niagara Parks.
- In 2024, 7,351 trees were planted across Niagara Parks properties.
 - Funds raised through Toonies for Trees supported the parks in exceeding the annual tree planting goal by over 50%.



Niagara Community Foundation \$20,000

- The Foundation is proud to receive \$20,000 in funding from the Niagara Community Foundation's 2025 Environmental Grant.
- The funding will support restoration work along the moraine including the removal of invasive species and planting over 7,500 native plants.

Announcement from NCF [here](#)





Federal Economic Development Agency - \$100,000

- In September 2024, the Niagara Parks Foundation was named a recipient of \$100,000 in funding from the Government of Canada through FedDev Ontario for the development of a new outdoor artificial skating loop.
- The funding was announced for 11 tourism organizations across the Niagara Region and surrounding areas that are diversifying their offerings and attracting new visitors to the region.
- The outdoor artificial skating loop is planned for the Artist Garden space outside of the Niagara Parks Floral Showhouse.

The Children's Garden

- Joint project to build Niagara's first Children's Garden – a two-acre interactive garden space for children of all ages and abilities to connect with nature.
- Currently in a research and development phase including:
 - Focus groups with local educators
 - Public engagement
 - Consultation with Indigenous groups
 - Consultations regarding accessibility and inclusion considerations
 - Engaging with prospective donors
 - Researching existing Children's Gardens and leveraging relationships with partner organizations through the American Public Gardens Association (APGA)





Focus Groups

Number of sessions to date: 4

Consulted:

- Royal Oak School, NOTL
- Niagara Catholic District School Board
- District School Board of Niagara
- Brock University (Faculty of Education)

Total Workshop Participants: 24

Next Steps:

- Focus groups will continue including input from schools and organizations outside of the Niagara region.
- Ensure we have multiple perspectives reflected in our feedback, including from more urban areas.

March Break Activation for Families

- During March Break, an activation was hosted in the auditorium space at the Butterfly Conservatory.
- Children were invited to create illustrations about what they enjoy most about nature.
- Parents invited to engage with staff about the project and participate in a brief online survey.
- Public survey now available on the Children's Garden webpage [here](#).



Project Timeline:

Fall 2024 – Spring/Summer 2025:

- Focus groups, public engagement, research, donor prospect meetings

Fall 2025:

- Detailed design to be finalized based on input from focus groups/engagement
- Site preparation

Spring 2026:

- Construction to begin

Summer 2028:

- Opening of the Children's Garden





Next Steps

- Additional focus groups and consultation sessions to inform plans for:
 - Indigenous storytelling
 - Accessibility and inclusion
- Teacher Open House event (April 10) at Niagara Parks Power Station will include a sign-up sheet for an online focus group session.
- Public engagement through online survey.
- Continue to meet with prospective donors.
- Formation of a campaign cabinet to support the project.
- Official launch of capital campaign.



Earth Day Celebration Tuesday, April 22

- 10:30 a.m. – Auditorium and plaza space at the Butterfly Conservatory.
- In celebration of Earth Day and the Foundation's 3rd anniversary of its launch.
- Public event to share updates from the past year and announce plans for the Children's Garden.
- Event will include a tree planting ceremony led by Nokimis (Grandmother) Cindilee and walking tours of the proposed location of the Children's Garden.
- Guests will receive a complimentary tree sapling to plant in their own communities in honour of Earth Day.





Thank you!

Thank you to the Commission for your ongoing support and to the Niagara Parks staff who have generously invested their time and energy to the Foundation.

Together, we are helping to preserve the environmental and cultural heritage of the 56-kilometre Niagara River Corridor.

Questions and Comments





NIAGARA
PARKS
FOUNDATION

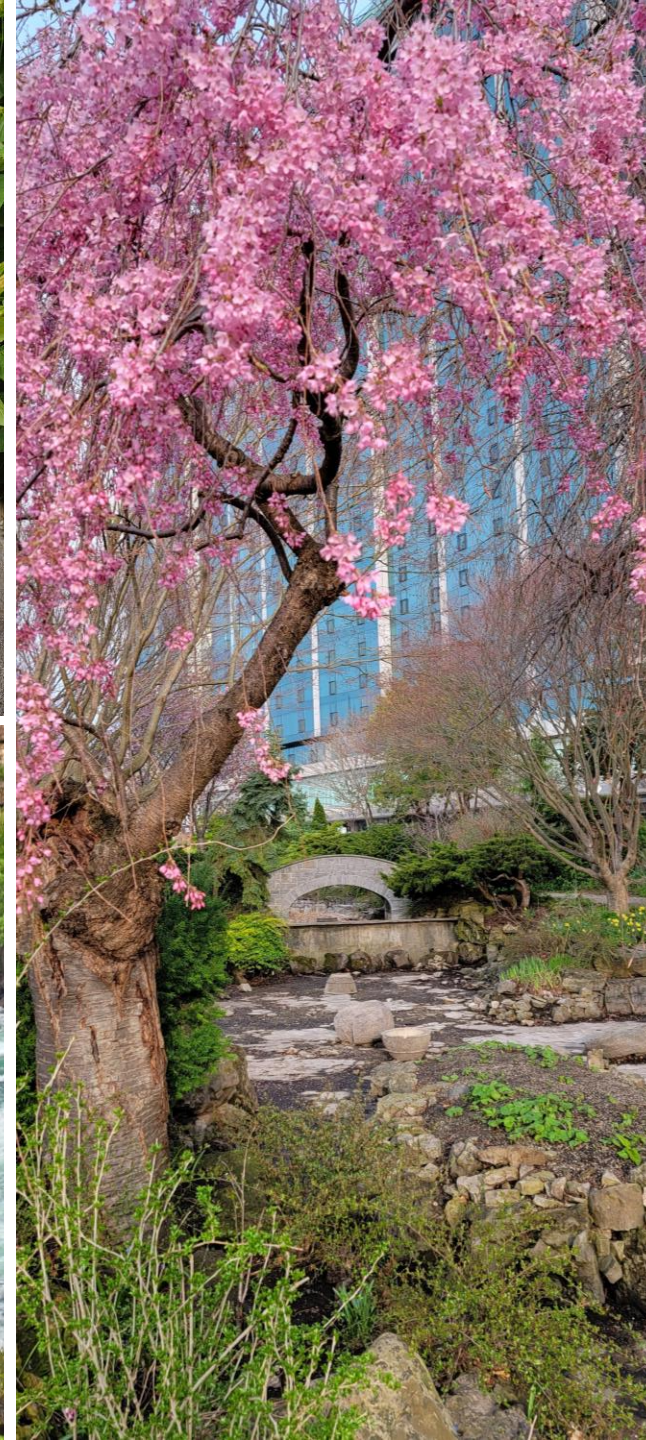


**NIAGARA
PARKS**

Business Highlights Presentation

Niagara Parks Commission – Public Meeting

Thursday, April 10, 2025



Niagara Parks

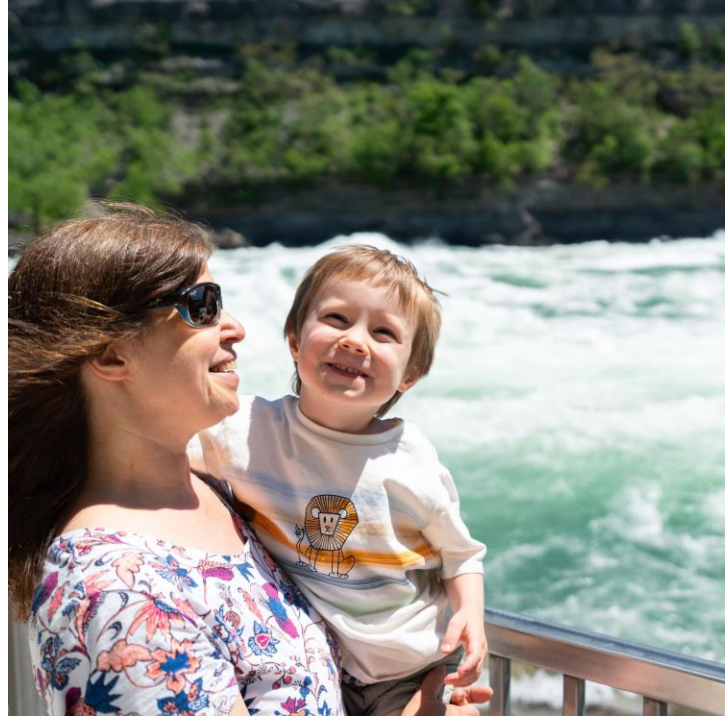
- Founded in 1885
- Operates under the Niagara Parks Act
- Two founding principles:
 - i. Niagara Parks would never be a burden to the taxpayers of Ontario
 - ii. Niagara Parks would as much as possible, be free to enjoy
- Board-governed operational enterprise under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
- 12-member Board of Commissioners
- **Mandate:** To be the environmental and cultural stewards of the Niagara River Corridor
- **Vision:** To be one of the most spectacular parks in the world



Stewards of the Niagara River Corridor

- Niagara Parks is a key demand generator, driving visitation and tourism to Niagara and Ontario.
- Responsible for maintaining 56km Niagara Parkway and 53km recreation trail, numerous parks, gardens and natural areas.
- Breadth of services include Niagara Parks Police Service, School of Horticulture.
- Re-established Niagara Parks Foundation focuses on raising funds to support additional environmental and cultural stewardship projects.
- As a self-funded organization, investments into enhancing our guest experiences that in turn, drive visitation and grow revenue, directly benefit our ability to deliver on our mandate of environmental and cultural stewardship.





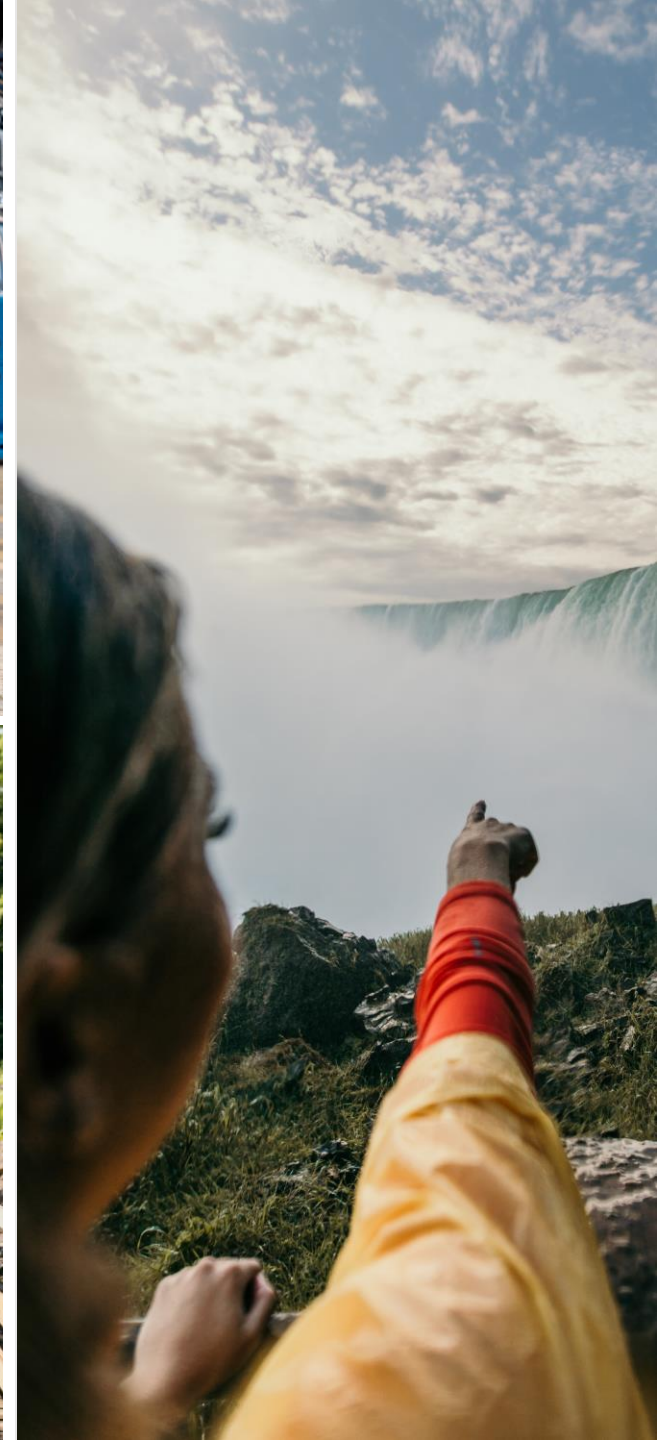
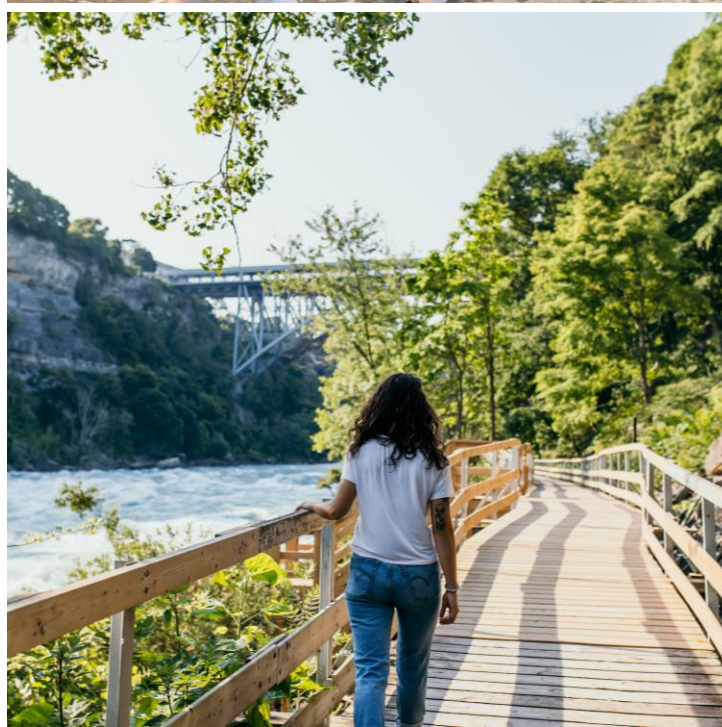
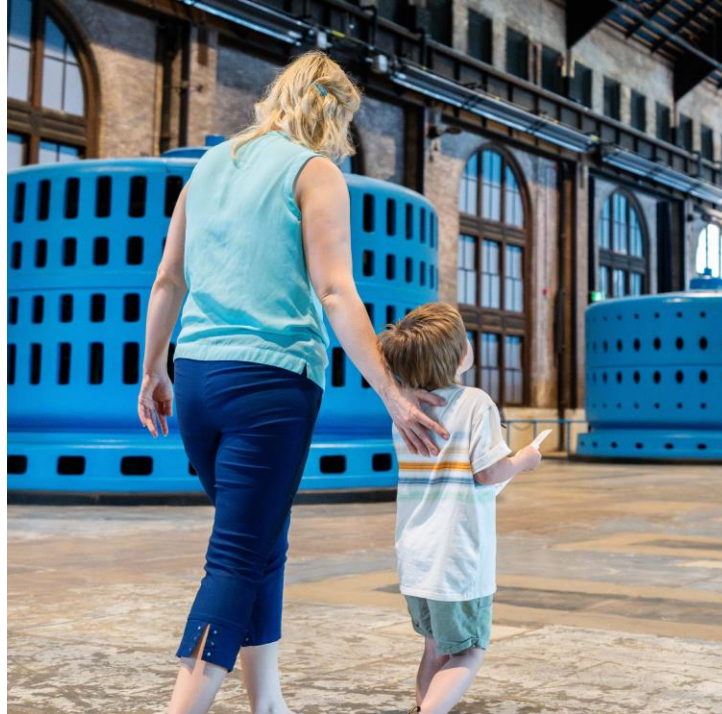
Funding & Operations

- One of the region's largest employers; 2,000 headcount in peak season; \$70 million payroll.
- Operating budget covers payroll, operating expenses to run its revenue-producing operations and key operational projects.
- Capital budget covers investments into deferred maintenance and strategic projects to enhance Niagara Parks' visitor experiences
 - \$175 million worth of deferred maintenance across Niagara Parks sites
 - **Major capital projects for 2024-25:**
 - *New flying theatre attraction*
 - *Repairs and maintenance*



Niagara Falls Adventure Pass Launch

- April 19: Spring-Summer season Launch
- Passholders receive exclusive benefits with destination partners and at Niagara Parks shops and restaurants
- Guests can save on bundled attractions including:
 - Journey Behind the Falls
 - Niagara Parks Power Station + The Tunnel
 - White Water Walk
 - Falls Incline Railway
 - WEGO
- NEW: Pass holders receive free parking at Rapidsview Parking Lot – Lot C
 - Two consecutive days with Adventure Pass Classic & Falls Pass
 - Three consecutive days with Adventure Pass Plus





April 1 Visit: Tesla Exhibit and Flying Theatre Construction

- Hon. Stan Cho, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming and Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff, Associate Minister of Energy and Intensive Industries visit Niagara Parks Power Station.
- Experienced new exhibit, *Tesla: A Spark of Genius*, now on display through October.
- Toured construction site for new Flying Theatre attraction set to open later this summer at Table Rock Centre.





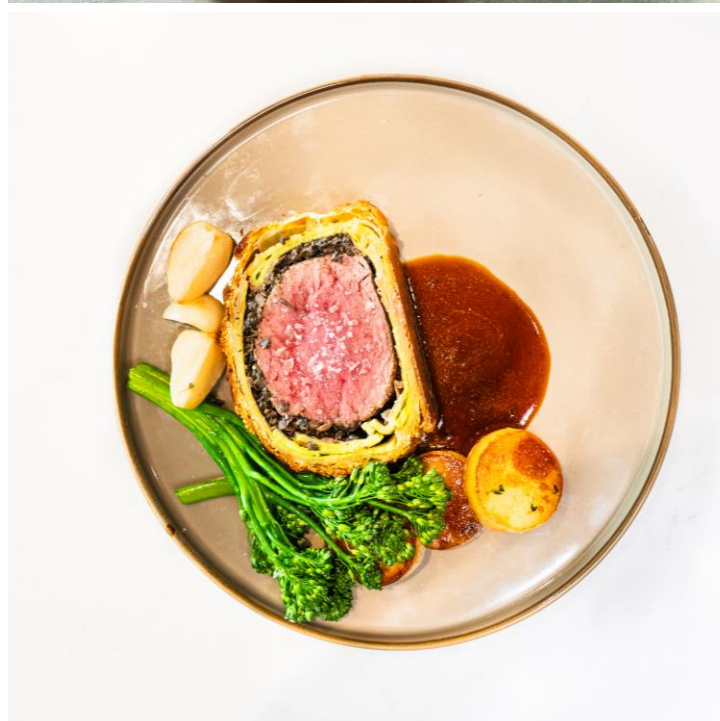
Prescribed Burns Program

- Prescribed burns take place on selected dates from March through to the end of May across Niagara Parks properties.
- Identified sites for 2025 program:
 - Chippawa Battlefield
 - Legends on the Niagara Golf Course
 - South Plains
 - Whirlpool Public Golf Course
 - Whirlpool Slope
 - Legacy Garden, adjacent to the Butterfly Conservatory
 - Lilac Gardens
 - Paradise Grove
- Since 2008, prescribed burns have been used to restore native prairie and savannah habitats.
- Burns completed so far include Whirlpool and Legends on the Niagara.
- More information: niagaraparks.com/stewardship



Chefs' Signature Dinner Friday, April 4

- Successful Chefs' Signature Dinner held at Table Rock House Restaurant (sold-out event).
- Five Niagara Parks chefs collaborated to create a distinct menu, with each chef responsible for one of the courses.
- Showcasing locally sourced ingredients and paired with VQA wines from top regional wineries.





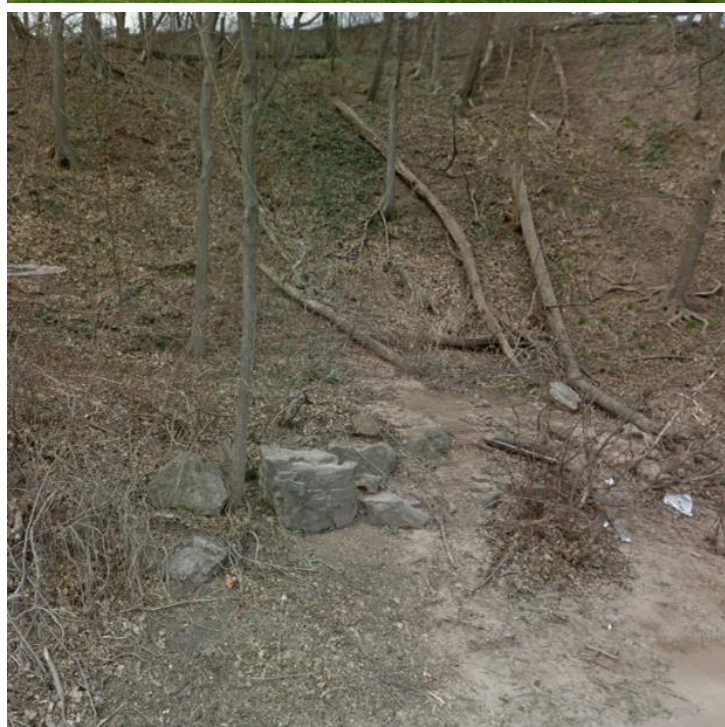
Environmental Stewardship

Grants Received:

- \$70,000 Canada Trees for Life grant will match \$70,000 from the Toonies for Trees program toward tree planting efforts in 2025 - 26.
- \$20,000 from Niagara Community Foundation for invasive species removal and native vegetation replanting to enhance wildlife habitat and slope stability along the moraine.

Trail Improvement:

- \$40,000 from Trans Canada Trail for replacing pedestrian bridge #35 along the Niagara River Recreation Trail.
- Award: 2024 Brock Experiential Education Community Partner of the Year Award (Social Sciences Faculty) for collaboration with Brock's Environmental Sustainability Research Centre, to be presented on April 15.
- Attended Brock University's World Water Day, showcasing Niagara Parks' stewardship of the Niagara River corridor.





Business Development

Retail & Attractions

- The Retail & Attractions team visited the CN Tower and Ripley's Aquarium to gain valuable insight into the operations, guest experience and retail strategies of our industry partners.
- Retail Enhancements: Spring visual merchandising updates continue to celebrate Canadian-made products and elevate the guest experience across Niagara Parks retail stores.



Golf Season Launch

- March 19: Online booking portal opened, with over 36,000 rounds reserved on the first day.
- April 18: Golf Season Opening
 - Whirlpool Golf Course and Legends on the Niagara's Chippawa and Ussher's Creek Courses to open (weather permitting).
 - Battlefield Course set to open May 16, following completion of cart path. Work is on schedule for asphalt installation and sod repairs to follow.
- Golf Academy: Instruction and TaylorMade club fittings underway with spring and summer programs scheduled.
- 2025 Leagues: Men's and women's public leagues return Tuesdays and Thursdays to Legends, offering 9-hole play followed by dinner.





Business Development

Sales and Events

March Sales activities included:

Hosted:

- Four client site inspections
- 14 wedding site inspections
- Seven business events
- Six familiarization tours

Attended:

- Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce Coffee Corner
- Niagara Business Leadership Series
- Niagara Falls Tourism Sales Mission in Kitchener-Waterloo

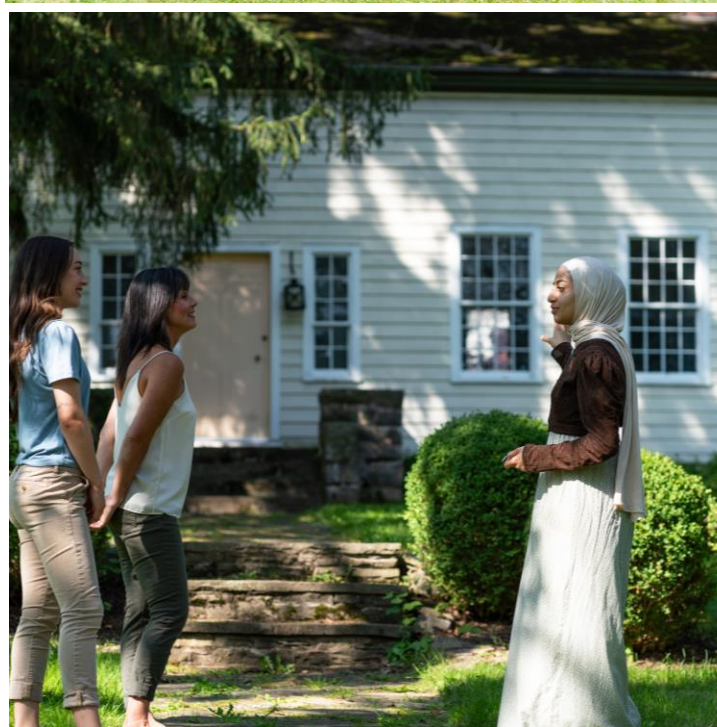


Planning, Environment and Culture

Heritage and Legacy

- Preparing Laura Secord Homestead and McFarland House for spring opening (May 10) and special events.
- Completed annual Faculty of Humanities activities at Brock, including guest talks and career fairs to recruit for seasonal heritage jobs and promote museum/heritage careers.
- Engaged in consultative sessions with the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals on the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Attended key progress meeting with Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Centre on a potential new book about Black History along the Niagara border.
- Developing a new interpretive panel with Hatch Engineering for installation at the Floral Clock.

NIAGARA PARKS



Planning, Environment and Culture

Horticulture

Interior Plant Décor:

- Niagara Parks' Design Committee and teams continue efforts to “bring the park inside” with new décor and plant installations in dining rooms for spring 2025.
- Updates planned for Table Rock Bistro, Queen Victoria Place Restaurant, Whirlpool Golf Course Lounge, Queenston Heights Restaurant, Legends on the Niagara Restaurant and reception spaces.

Production & Exhibits:

- Greenhouse Production and Exhibit teams exploring regional facilities to enhance guest experiences and horticultural excellence.





Planning, Environment and Culture

School of Horticulture

- The Niagara Parks School of Horticulture showcased its excellence at the National Collegiate Landscape Challenge (NCLC) hosted by Colorado State University, competing against 770 students from 54 schools.
- The team of 11 students achieved an impressive 18th place overall finish, with Ben Joy securing 1st place in the Wood Ornamental Plant Identification category.
- This prestigious event allowed students to demonstrate their skills, connect with industry professionals, and solidify the school's reputation as a leader in horticultural education.



Engineering and Parks Operations

Engineering and Project Management

Flying Theatre:

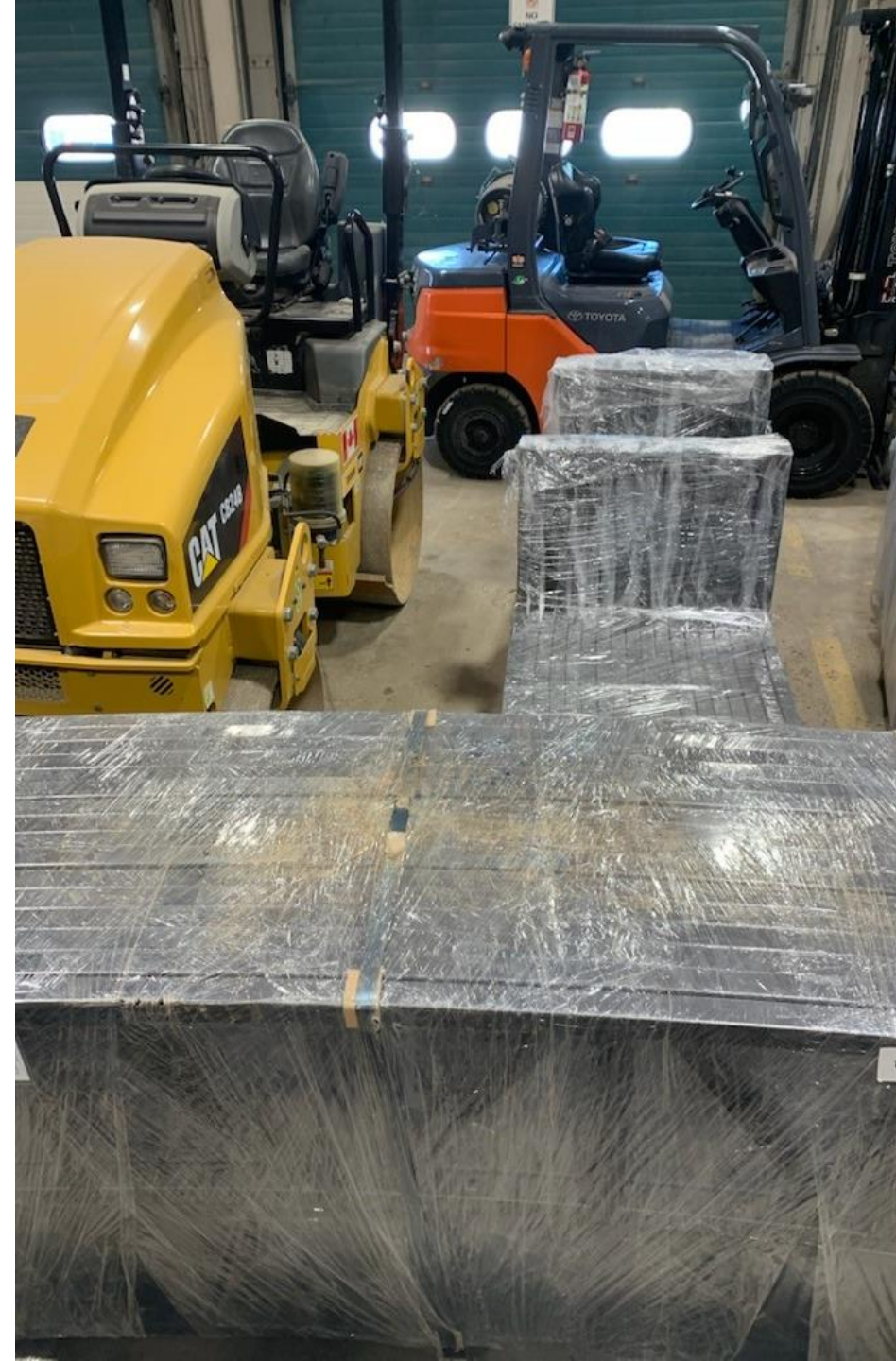
The final containers of Brogent parts and equipment have arrived on-site.

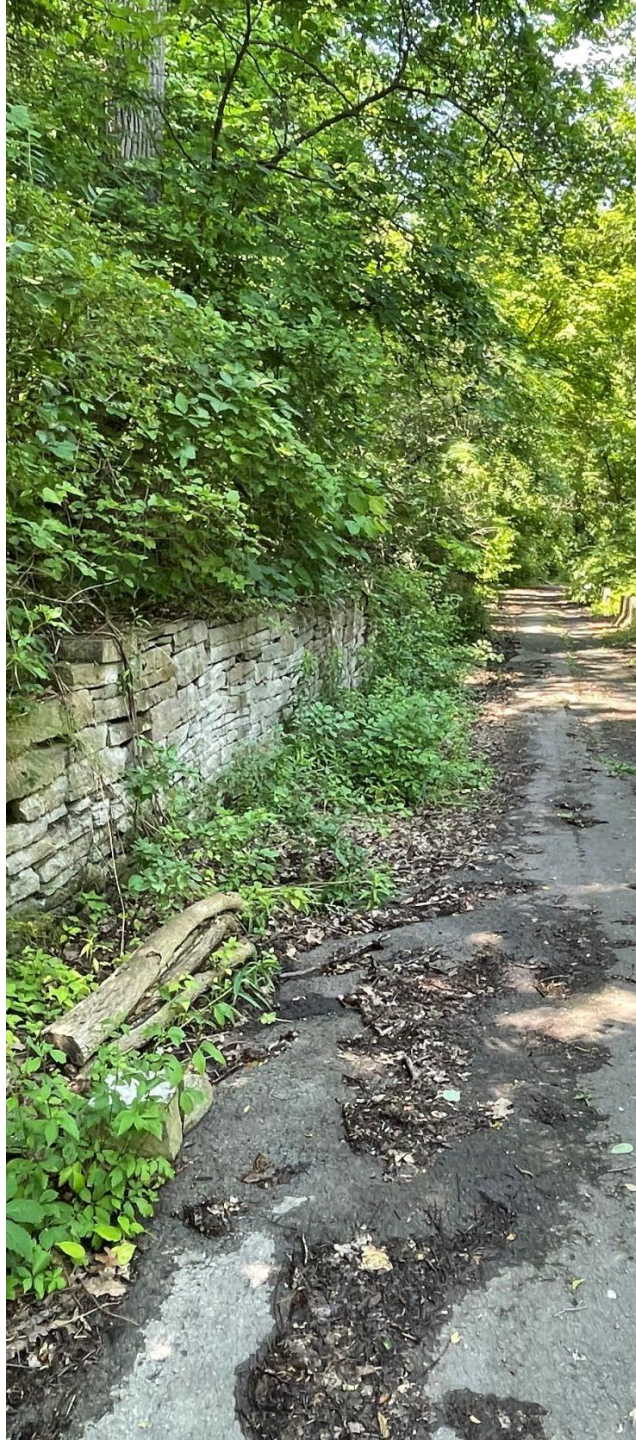
Niagara Parkway Resurfacing:

Resurfacing project from Clifton Hill to Fraser Hill scheduled for mid to late April (weather permitting).

Legends Cart Path Replacements:

Drainage and granular base construction complete; asphalt scheduled for April 15, taking 2 weeks; final restoration to be completed by June 13; with tree planting at a 5:1 replacement ratio.





Engineering and Parks Operations

Engineering and Project Management

Fraser Hill Rehabilitation:

Approved rehabilitation as access point to Queen Victoria Park; design for two-lane roadway with sidewalk option begins April 2025.

Pedestrian Bridge #35 Replacement:

Replacement in Niagara-on-the-Lake awarded; scheduled before July 2025; awaiting confirmed date from fabricator.

Pedestrian Bridge #36 Replacement:

Replacement of aging bridge south of Toronto Power Generating Station in preparation for future infrastructure upgrades in Queen Victoria Park.

Engineering and Parks Operations

Facility Services

- Facility staff are being recalled for April start dates to assist in the opening of buildings and services in advance of the 2025 season.
- Hiring of new WEGO Attendants to aid with the added operation of the Blue Line and increased cleaning demands.

Parks Operations

- On-site delivery of 4 x 40 ft. containers of Winter Festival of Lights decor.
- Litter cleanup along Fort Erie shoreline from Phipps St. to Jarvis St.
- Urban litter vacuum acquired for use in Queen Victoria Park/Grandview Marketplace.
- Safety improvement: Maintenance Centre waste ramp curbs painted for high visibility.



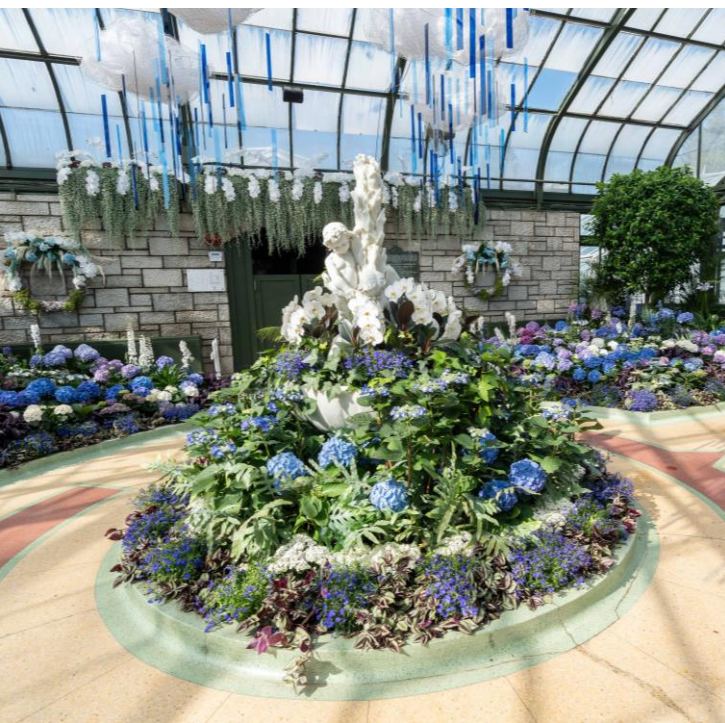


Niagara Parks Police Service

Niagara Parks Police Service representatives attended:

- Meeting with federal, provincial and municipal police leadership regarding border integrity issues.
- Weekly meetings with the NG-911 implementation team.
- Annual In-Service Training with the NRPS for updates and Use-of-Force requalification.
- Chief Forcier visited the Niagara Regional Police Service Training Unit and greeted Solicitor General Kerzner during an agency visit.
- Two individuals were arrested and charged for refusing to provide a breath sample, contrary to the Criminal Code of Canada, along with multiple traffic-related offences.
- Constable Shannon Halliday completed the Scenes of Crime Officer Course with the NRPS Forensic Services Unit.
- Const. Brock Wunovic completed the Crisis Intervention Training Course with the NRPS.





Upcoming Events

- April 22 – Earth Day Celebration with the Niagara Parks Foundation
- May 10: Heritage Sites Re-open
- May 10: Whispering Strings: Celtic Melodies for Mom Performance at Queenston Chapel
- May 10 –11: Mother's Day Tea at McFarland House
- May 11: Mother's Day Brunch at Niagara Parks Restaurants
- May 3 – June 1: Hydrangea Display at the Floral Showhouse
- May 28: Women's Golf Day – 10th Anniversary
- June 13: Music Trivia Night at Old Fort Erie
- June 15: Father's Day Special/Brunch at Niagara Parks restaurants
- June 16: Tennis and Pickleball courts to open at Queenston Heights Park
- June 20: Niagara Jazz Festival's 'Summer Mardi Gras' flagship event at Oakes Garden Theatre



Questions & Comments

