

The Niagara Parks Commission

Minutes of the public meeting of The Niagara Parks Commission held on Thursday, July 10, 2025 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 Tom Insinna
Commissioner Dan La Caprara
Commissioner Wayne Redekop
Commissioner Ted Salci
Commissioner Erwin Wiens
- Regrets:** Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe
Commissioner Jim Diodati
- Staff:** David Adames, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary to the Commission
Marcelo Gruosso, Chief Operating Officer
Paul Forcier, Police Chief
Lepa Jankovic, Inspector
Steve Barnhart, Senior Landscape Architect
Chris Giles, Director, Communications and Marketing
Laura Pingue, Chief Financial Officer
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**

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

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 in attendance.

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

"Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our July Public Commission Meeting. Looking back since our last meeting in June, we had the pleasure of hosting our Minister Stan Cho for a tour along the south Niagara Parkway on June 16. We started the tour in Crystal Beach, joined by Commissioner Tom Insinna, Fort Erie Mayor and Commissioner Wayne Redekop, CAO Chris McQueen and Town staff members Caralee Grummett and Kevin Beauchamp. We then toured Old Fort Erie, the Niagara Parks Marina and made a stop at Gonder's Flats to see the goats who had just arrived from a local farm for their "shift" - chomping down invasive species. It was an excellent opportunity to showcase this section of Niagara Parks to our Minister and his team. Friday, June 20, we hosted the signature event for Niagara Jazz Festival at Oakes Garden Theatre. The theme was summer mardi gras, bringing together jazz music with New Orleans-style cuisine, along with storytelling about Niagara's rich Black and Indigenous history. On June 21, I was joined by Commissioner Dan La Caprara at the unveiling of the memorial for Dr. Jose Rizal at Grand View plaza. I was invited by the Filipinos of Niagara to attend a celebratory dinner event that evening where I was joined by Niagara Falls Mayor and Commissioner Jim Diodati who delivered remarks and expressed tremendous praise for Niagara Parks. Also on June 21, the new tennis and pickleball courts at Queenston Heights Park opened to the public and we hosted a staff and family open house there on June 25. We also hosted the official ribbon-cutting ceremony this past Monday, which was well attended, especially by members of local tennis and pickleball communities. We worked with a few of these representatives on the court specifications to make sure they met the highest standards, including Rosemary Goodwin, Harry Fauquier

and John Hindle. Thank you to commissioners Erwin Wiens, Ted Salci and Dan La Caprara for attending. On June 24, David and I presented an update to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake council. This presentation was well received by councillors, with some good discussion, including on public safety within Queen Victoria Park. On June 25, we joined Hatch and OPG to unveil a new commemorative panel at the Floral Clock, dedicated to the history of power generation in Niagara. Thank you to Commissioner Tom Insinna for attending. The following day we celebrated the opening of NAE's new Starbucks location at Grand View with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by partners and stakeholders. Our new Friendship Arch sculpture at Table Rock Centre was installed just in time for Canada Day and is already exceptionally popular with guests with many lining up to take a photo. Despite Canada Day falling on a Tuesday this year, we saw strong visitation across all our sites in the days leading up to and including the holiday. Our staff wore custom-made Canada Day t-shirts designed by our marketing team and produced locally in St. Catharines. We also gave away complimentary Canada flags at each of our attractions to help celebrate the holiday. It was a busy week across the Park with the July 4th celebrated last Friday leading into another strong weekend. Queen Victoria Park was filled with guests attending the extended fireworks displays at 10pm, which were synced to music. Thank you to Chief Forcier and our Police for managing the crowds and implementing successful road closures on both holidays. On July 5, we hosted the annual Battle of Chippawa Ceremony honouring the historic War of 1812 battle. This ceremony is hosted annually at the Chippawa Battlefield that is maintained as a heritage site by Niagara Parks. Thank you to Commissioner Ted Salci who attended and delivered remarks on behalf of the Board. This past month we also welcomed our new Inspector, Lepa Jankovic, to the Niagara Parks Police Service".

Chair Gale called upon Chief Forcier to introduce Lepa. Chief Forcier delivered the following remarks:

"It is my pleasure to introduce Lepa Jankovic to the Commission as our new Inspector with the Niagara Parks Police Service. Lepa brings with her a wealth of experience, leadership, and expertise, to our Service, and to team NPC. Lepa was raised in Niagara and has strong roots in the community. She graduated from Brock University and Niagara College and began her law enforcement journey as a Customs Officer at Rainbow Bridge. She later joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), where she gained diverse frontline experience across multiple provinces. Her career has been marked by specialized investigative roles, including work in controlled drug enforcement, financial crime investigations, human trafficking, passport fraud, and international security matters. Most recently, Lepa served as Unit Commander of the Border Integrity Unit where she led a dedicated team protecting Canada's border right here in Niagara. Lepa has been a subject matter expert in human smuggling and trafficking, offering instruction and presentations at prestigious institutions such as the Canadian Police College, FBI International Law Enforcement Conference, and agencies around the world."

“Lepa’s dedication to law enforcement has earned her numerous accolades, including the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal, ACAMS Public/Private Partnership Award, Commanding Officer’s Commendation, and the Women’s Courage Award, among others. Lepa has a proven track record in building strong ties with partner agencies, is well known within public safety circles, and brings tremendous energy to everything she does. Lepa’s exceptional experience, leadership, and commitment to public safety makes her a tremendous asset to Niagara Parks. We look forward to the valuable contributions she will bring to our team. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to Lepa as she embarks on this exciting new chapter with us.”

Lepa Jankovic thanked Chief Forcier, the Commissioners and staff for the warm welcome.

6. Approval of Draft Minutes

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the minutes dated June 12, 2025 (COMM-2025-11).

Carried.

7. Presentations

7.1 Battle of Fort Erie Reenactment

Erin Ronfeld, Manager, Old Fort Erie, provided a presentation respecting the Battle of Fort Erie. The annual siege of Old Fort Erie reenactment will take place on August 9 and 10, 2025.

Staff will look into offering a small token of appreciation for participants such as a pin.

Staff will confirm the date/time/location of the next community tree planting event and advise Commissioners.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission;

1. Receive the presentation respecting the Battle of Fort Erie Reenactment for information.

Carried.

7.2 Business Highlights

David Adames provided a presentation respecting Business Highlights.

Staff will review the clearing plan for vegetation overgrowth for viewsheds and other areas along the parkway.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Receive the presentation respecting Business Highlights for information.

Carried.

8. Items from Golf Committee

Committee Chair La Caprara commented on reports from the July 2 meeting of the Golf Committee.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission

Approve the recommendations as contained in Report 2025-64 Summary of Recommendations from the Golf Committee respecting the following matters:

- a) Golf Capital Update (Memo 2025-40)
- b) Adaptive Golf Instructor (Memo 2025-39)

Carried.

9. Items from Property and Infrastructure Committee

Marcelo Gruosso provided a presentation respecting capital projects update.

Fort Erie Shoreline Protection and Breakwall Repairs

Staff were asked to see if there is a way to cordon off an area for pedestrians to travel through safely during the construction to avoid using the road while the path is closed for repair.

The following motion was moved by Commissioner Redekop and seconded by Commissioner Wiens:

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

Approve the recommendations as contained in Report 2025-65 Summary of Recommendations from the Property and Infrastructure Committee (save and except Report 2025-60 respecting Residential Shoreline Dock Licence Sign Program which will be voted on separately) respecting the following matters:

- a) Capital Projects Presentation
- a) Planning Activity Summary (Memo 2025-42)

Carried.

Residential Shoreline Dock Licence Sign Program (Report 2025-60)

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Receive Report 2025-60 regarding NPC's Residential Shoreline Dock Licence Sign Program.
2. Direct staff to proceed with the modified Residential Shoreline Dock Licence Sign Program as setout in the report.

Carried. Commissioner Redekop was opposed.

10. Other Business

There were no items for other business.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday August 7, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at the School of Horticulture, 2565 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6T2.

12. Closed Session

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission move into Closed Session.

Carried.

The Commission moved into the Closed Session at 10:13 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Members: Chair Bob Gale
Vice Chair Graham Coveney
Commissioner April Cotton
Commissioner Tom Insinna
Commissioner Dan La Caprara
Commissioner Wayne Redekop
Commissioner Ted Salci
Commissioner Erwin Wiens

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

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