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# **BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS REPORT**

**FEBRUARY 2017**

**COMMISSION MEETING**

## Research & Development

- Members of the Heritage team will be assisting with the archives at Oak Hall as they move to a temporary home at Old Fort Erie.
- Culinary Services Managers and Chefs completed menu engineering in January to analyze menus from 2016 for popularity and profitability in preparation for 2017 menus.
- The new 70-foot reach bucket truck replaced our 19-year-old truck and provides an additional 15 feet of reach. The existing bucket will be retained for shared use park wide and as a back-up unit when the new one is in for service.
- The 10-year-old Bandit chipper has reached its replacement life cycle. The current unit has several critical systems which are at a point of soon needing major reconstruction. The new Morbark chipper can process up to a 21-inch diameter log. This is an additional 3 inches of chipping capacity which will help to build on our plan of processing as many trees as we can on site as opposed to hauling unprocessed logs away. This in turn reduces the need to cut material into smaller pieces, handle brush by hand and reduces the time it takes to rake and clean up processing areas.
- Emerald Ash tree removals and clean up are continuing at Legends on the Niagara and Whirlpool.

## Human Resources

- Chefs commenced creative menu training to support local food and current trends to support the FeastON certification of full serve restaurants in January.
- Culinary Services Managers are working on the spring orientation and training sessions with content to prepare for April.
- Agronomy staff recently attended the Ontario Golf Course Superintendents Association conference at the Scotiabank Convention Center. The educational sessions provided training on industry best practices and specialized workshops for optimal turf, playing conditions and environmental initiatives.
- Parks staff attended the Landscape Ontario Trade Show and received Propane Handling training.
- Human Resources staff attended department meetings to provide human resources support of business partners for organizational design, succession, performance management, investigations, and employee engagement.
- Human Resources staff assisted the Parks Department in restructuring of department resources to strengthen the operation and gain efficiencies.

- Full-time staff appraisal process for 2016 is underway.
- A Quarterly meeting was held with OPSEU Park Employees.
- A number of union meetings were also held with OPSEU to discuss a variety of labour issues.
- Preparation work was completed for the procurement of the Employee Assistance Program.
- Preparation work is underway for the procurement of First Aid/CPR/AED services.
- Staff met with the Employee Assistance Program Account Manager to identify 2017 needs and to discuss programs and services that are available to employees.
- A number of job descriptions and Job Information Questionnaires were updated and reviewed in anticipation of pending recruitment needs.
- Employee Survey Meetings were completed with all departments and the development of action plans is underway.
- Staff attended a number of meetings as part of the Safety Group Advantage Program (SGAP).
- Human Resources staff participated in external training related to workplace violence and conducting associated investigations.
- Staff met with Revenue departments to discuss the 2017 recruitment model.
- A meeting was held with the OPSEU Pension Trust for information sharing and to identify 2017 needs.
- Staff undertook a review of a number of proposed changes to provincial and federal legislation relating to employment.

### **Partnerships**

- The Laura Secord Homestead was selected by the National Ballet of Canada as one of their '150 Pointes'. A pointe shoe arrived at the Homestead as a part of the Ballet's contribution to Canada 150.
- As a Member of the National Association of Landscape Professionals, the School of Horticulture Assistant Superintendent was invited to represent the NPC School of Horticulture and participate as a Panel Member of the Reaccreditation for SUNY Cobelskill (Cobelskill, NY). The School of Horticulture is the only college in Canada to have its diploma recognized as an accredited four-year Bachelor Degree by members of the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

The designation is significant because it increases the awareness and prestige of the School in comparison to other horticulture colleges and universities across North America.

- Several ash trees were milled for the carpentry shop to re-deck an NPC float trailer. The cost was minimal and has provided a durable hardwood deck which should last for years. This process proved successful and will be repeated in the future.
- Continued to implement the Niagara River Coastal Wetland Restoration Project in collaboration with the MNRF. Engineered drawings have been finalized and received. Procurement of a contractor for implementation is underway with work to be completed by March 15, 2017. Letters to adjacent landowners were distributed. NPC Staff met on-site with one landowner to discuss project.
- Sales Staff attended the following:
  - January 14-18 - American Bus Association, Cleveland, OH
  - February 1-3 - Canadian Society of Association Executives Tête-à-Tête Trade Show, Ottawa, ON

### **Facilities & Technology**

- Heritage staff are now working with Past Perfect for artifacts and artwork as well as the introduction of Skype tour previews for teachers.
- Capital improvements completed at Elements on the Falls restaurant, including new carpet, new kitchen floor and refresh of washrooms. These projects are for Health and Safety, improved image as well as increased seating capacity which will have a positive financial impact.
- Trail counter data continues to be collected from the Niagara Glen stairs. A total of 5,228 visitors used the trails between December 2016 and January 2017. Total visitation to the Niagara Glen in 2016 was 130,735 compared to 108,844 in 2015 an increase of 20%.
- The Butterfly Conservatory annual maintenance shutdown was completed on time. Further repair and renovation of upper pathway was completed addressing water drainage.
- Completed GIS mapping of all specimen trees in Central Parks. This included a record of tree name and condition of each tree.
- Completed tracking and data collected of all Parks small equipment inventory using iPads.
- Manager and staff training continues for the new Learning Management System.

- Accessible doors, with appropriate widths and automatic door openers, were installed at the main entrance of the Victoria Park Gift Shop and in Presentation Rooms A and B at the Butterfly Conservatory.



- Upgrades to Presentation Room B at the Butterfly Conservatory were completed mid-December. The new audio/video system enhances the visitor experience with the highly informative introductory video.
- Butterfly Conservatory – Production House - ridge vent screen replacements and rack and pinion system are completed. This initiative is the first phase of upgrades to mechanical systems for the Production Greenhouses. Upgrades are necessary due to normal wear over 20 years of operations.
- Butterfly Conservatory – Exhibit Hall – Phase 1 renovation has been completed. The purpose is to create a multi-functional space to enhance revenue generating opportunities as well as guest experience offerings with larger program exhibits.
- Work continued on the set up and implementation of the new Payroll/Time and Attendance/Human Resources system. Training sessions were held for Managers and Supervisors from January 9-24. A number of communications have been issued to staff to keep them informed about the product features and implementation time frames.
- In January, IT closed 269 Helpdesk service tickets. YTD 2016 a record 4,150 Helpdesk tickets were closed. IT service levels have remained consistent throughout 2016 and into 2017.
- The Helpdesk requests have increased 43% in January as new projects are launched in preparation for the upcoming season.

- Records and Information Management staff completed initial interviews and records inventories with staff to prepare a function-based records retention schedule and destruction authority; this policy was approved and lays the groundwork to begin implementing the records management framework into the regular course of business.
- Work is underway to begin records destruction in those departments where records have been identified as eligible for destruction.
- Two Records Management workshops have been completed in 2017, with a view to delving deeper into the process mapping of each business function for the purposes of creating a classification schema reflective of the work done in each area.
- Work has begun on EDRMS (Electronic Document and Records Management System) specifications and functional requirements.
- Records and Information Management staff removed the archives from the basement of Oak Hall and re-located the material to Old Fort Erie. The material is being inventoried, including a basic preservation assessment.
- The ADP Time/Attendance and Payroll project implementation is well underway with new time clocks installed and configured at all sites and training for staff on ADP's Time and Attendance completed in January. Testing is scheduled to begin February 27 with a target implementation completion date of April 21. This new system will replace antiquated systems and paper processes, increasing time-keeping efficiency and providing better and more timely reporting for decision-making purposes. When the project is fully implemented, ADP will process NPC Payroll.
- To improve network performance and reliability, 'Cogeco for Business' will be implemented at Old Fort Erie in February. This network improvement will provide larger bandwidth for email, data, building alarms and CCTV surveillance.
- A fiber circuit now connects the Niagara Parks Police with the Niagara Regional Police. This was completed in January and has enabled the decommissioning of older circuits.
- The NPC point-to-point radios on the Queenston Tower were decommissioned in January and Parks staff will work with Niagara Regional Police to coordinate their removal from the Tower.
- The Rapidsview facility is now connected to the NPC fiber network. This provides improved network performance and reliability to each of the buildings at Rapidsview (WEGO, Licensing, Records Management). VoIP has been

implemented. connecting the sites to the rest of the NPC VoIP telephony network.

- A short fiber connection from Grand View Marketplace to Grand View Bus Management and Clifton Hill Welcome Centre was completed in January, eliminating point-to-point radios and business interruptions caused by Wi-Fi interference.
- The School of Horticulture and Butterfly Café have been connected with a short fiber run by repairing an existing conduit between the two sites. This will provide a more reliable network connection to the School of Horticulture and enable the decommissioning of an old set of point to point radios that are no longer supported.
- A fiber run was installed to connect the Old Yards to the NPC fiber network and provide internet access to the site.
- The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution, Microsoft Dynamics CRM, is being implemented to better manage customers and sales prospects through the sales order cycle.
- NCR's Aloha Pulse Mobile Application was implemented to provide real-time access to Culinary Services sales transactions. The application has been deployed at Elements as a 'proof of concept' pilot project and the feedback received was favourable.
- NPC's main file server was replaced in February to provide improved access and meet NPC's new server operating system standard of Windows 2012.
- The old School of Horticulture (SOH) phone system was damaged when wildlife gained access to a transformer. As a result, the SOH now has a new phone and voice mail system. This was completed in December.

### **Finance**

- Overall, Culinary Services continues to record an increase in revenue as compared to budget plan. For January, due to capital improvements, Elements on the Falls restaurant closed from January 9 – 30, 2017 with Queen Victoria Place restaurant open to service pre-booked groups.
- Procurement Activity from Nov 29th through Jan 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – there were 87 procurement projects valued at approximately \$3.24 million facilitated by the Procurement division.

## Products & Services

- Working through the Ministry, Heritage is now offering brief Skype tours for educators. These short visits are a glimpse of Niagara Parks Commission offerings.
- Culinary Services quick serve Tim Hortons continues to support the Perfect Pairing Promotion and is preparing to launch a new espresso program.
- Elements on the Falls restaurant prepared Valentine's Day feature prix fixe menus.
- A RFT will be issued to procure new carts, club rentals and grass cutting equipment for the 2017 season at Legends and Whirlpool golf courses.
- Legends on the Niagara and Whirlpool golf courses are handling the winter well. To date, there are no issues with regards to the turf. It is anticipated that a standard opening date will occur in early April at both golf courses.
- The Legends on the Niagara winter indoor golf academy is fully operational, providing a full range of services seven days a week. Services include indoor practice combined with coaching utilizing the swing analysis recorders. The golf simulator is available to rent on an hourly basis with a selection of 30 golf courses to play.
- The NPC Golf All Access program is available for sale to the public in limited quantities. The program features 20 or 50 round packages with additional incentives to play at NPC golf courses.
- The Niagara's Fury attraction completed its annual shut down for maintenance and repairs, re-opening in early February.
- To date, the total number of trees removed from January – December 2016 is 2,156, of which 1,563 trees were Ash trees. The balance consisted of dead or hazardous trees.



The additional crew to the Forestry department provides for two distinct teams:

- Removal and Project team: This team will be responsible for the majority of tree removals throughout the NPC. At this time, they are focused on the Emerald Ash Borer removals.
- Pruning and Maintenance team: This team will focus on the management of our living urban forest with emphasis on structural pruning for safety



starting in the highest trafficked areas of the park and the pruning for health and esthetics of our trees.

- Winter maintenance continues throughout the Parks. As well, Forestry staff have commenced pruning for hazards and equipment clearances in the Queenston Heights Park area.
- The Canadian Raptor Conservancy was the successful proponent to the “Live Raptor Bird” display which will complement the ROM Northern Owl Exhibit set to launch February 13, 2017. The live birds and demonstrations are scheduled for Saturdays and key holiday dates starting Family Day weekend through to April 23, 2017.
- A complete inventory of all corporate policies and departmental policies has been undertaken. Work has begun on a new policy framework, providing more guidance on policy content and creation.

### Image

- In honour of Heritage Month and to support our coworkers at Table Rock, staff will be on hand at Table Rock through the long weekend of February, March Break and Easter. NPC will be commemorating all things Canada.
- Culinary Services with Wedding and Social Sales hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual NPC Wedding Show at Legends on the Niagara on January 28, 2017.



- Wedding and Social Sales with Marketing produced a new Wedding booklet highlighting NPC's Wedding Ceremony and Receptions Venues. The book represents a new and refreshed look for Niagara Parks Wedding locations
- Wedding and Social Sales attended the Niagara Spring Wedding Show in January in St. Catharines.

- Elements on the Falls restaurant installed a new wheelchair ramp and relocated side stands for improved customer service and better sight lines to view the Falls.



- On January 3, 2017, Warner Cable News visited the Butterfly Conservatory to film a Promotional Travel Segment for New York State. New Yorkers were invited to travel north to the Conservatory's tropical paradise.
- The Botanical Gardens staff hosted a group of international students from the Hokkai Gakeun Sapporo High School, Japan on December 12, 2016. The purpose of the visit was based upon the groups interests specific to the ecological importance of the Butterfly Conservatory and the mission of the School of Horticulture. Teams toured the group through the operation as well as provided a presentation about the School.
- The School of Horticulture students came second place after participating in the "Come Alive Outside" Design Challenge supported by Landscape Ontario in October 2016. This community based program working with student ages is a significant contributor to the promotion of the School of Horticulture program.
- NPC Staff and students participated in the Industry Trade Show and Congress for Landscape Ontario on January 9-11, 2017. To further promote the school in an increasingly competitive market, the School of Horticulture for the first time constructed a planted exhibit within the tradeshow.

The design and construction were the results of academic and applied course projects.



## **Appendix A**

December 16, 2016 – February 16, 2017

### **Media Releases**

- November 23 - Experience the Holiday Traditions of the Past at Niagara Parks Heritage Sites
- November 23 - Holiday Events at Niagara Parks Heritage Sites
- November 23 - Falls Illumination Unveiling Ceremony Announced
- November 25 - New Year's Eve Announcement
- November 28 - Legends on the Niagara Winter Golf Academy
- December 22 - Winter Holiday Activities
- December 28 - New Year's Eve Road Closures
- January 4 - Niagara Parks Update on Investment and Development Opportunity for NPC's Marina at Miller's Creek
- January 4 - NPC to Undertake Annual Attractions Maintenance
- January 10 - Niagara Parks to Undergo Water main Project
- January 11 - Movie Nights Return to Old Fort Erie
- January 11 - Auction of Lost and Unclaimed Goods
- January 12 - Niagara Parks to Host Annual Wedding Open House
- January 16 - Niagara Parks Floral Showhouse Unveils Spring Display

### **VIP Tours**

- December 12 - Niagara Parks hosted 35 high school students from Sapporo, Japan, who were in Niagara to complete a Brock University Customized English Language Program – with a focus on tourism. While in Canada, the students had been working on presentations on the tourism offerings/events and activities in their home community and wished to make a presentation to NPC representatives, as well as learn more about the operations of Niagara Parks, the Butterfly Conservatory and NPC's School of Horticulture. Following a tour of NPC's Butterfly Conservatory, the students met with NPC representatives to learn more about the Conservatory, the School of Horticulture and the Commission, prior to sharing their own presentations on the tourism offerings of Sapporo, Japan.

- January 12 - NPC was pleased to host a visit by the Deputy Director and Director of Legislative Affairs and Policy Research, for the Mount Taishan Scenic Area Management Committee. Mount Tai is considered a mountain of historical and cultural significance in China, and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987. A presentation on NPC's responsibilities and operations was provided by NPC Chair Janice Thomson and CEO Reegan McCullough, followed by a tour of NPC's Table Rock Complex and Journey Behind the Falls attraction. In the fall of 2015, Chair Thomson and the Director of the Mount Taishan Scenic Area Management Committee formalized a Memorandum of Understanding between both organizations aimed at the possible establishment of a sister park relationship between the two popular natural tourism attractions.



### Events

- November 19 - January 31: OPG Winter Festival of Lights
- November 19 - January 27: Winter Fireworks
- December 3 - January 8: Kaleidoscope Christmas and the Wishing Walk at the Butterfly Conservatory
- December 10 - 11, 2016: Holiday Tea at the McFarland House
- December 31: New Year's Eve Niagara Falls
- January 14 - April 8: Floral Showhouse Annual Spring Display
- January 19: Old Fort Erie Film Nights at Old Fort Erie
- February 12 - 14: Elements on the Falls Restaurant Valentine's Dinner
- February 13 - April 23: Northern Owl Exhibit at the Butterfly Conservatory