



## The Niagara Parks Commission

Minutes of the public meeting of The Niagara Parks Commission held on Thursday, May 8, 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 Jim Diodati  
Commissioner Tom Insinna  
Commissioner Wayne Redekop  
Commissioner Ted Salci

Regrets: Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe  
Commissioner Dan La Caprara  
Commissioner Erwin Wiens

Staff: David Adames, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary to the Commission  
Marcelo Gruosso, Chief Operating Officer  
Paul Forcier, Police Chief  
Steve Barnhart, Senior Landscape Architect  
Chris Giles, Director, 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

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

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 May Public Commission Meeting. Since our last meeting a month ago, we have opened up seasonal attractions including the Whirlpool Aero Car and White Water Walk, as well as our golf courses – Whirlpool Golf Course and Ussher's Creek and the Chippawa Executive at Legends. Battlefield will reopen next week following a full cart path replacement. Both restaurants at Whirlpool and Legends are now open as well. Today is the opening date for our partner Niagara City Cruises, who will officially set sail for their 2025 season, a later start than normal due to the amount of ice and snow in the Niagara River. We also saw the impact of the snow and ice at our attractions – including the Tunnel at the Niagara Parks Power Station. When the ice boom came out of the river, the viewing platform was buried in snow, forcing us to close the Tunnel over Easter weekend. I was on-site and met with staff to view the situation. The team worked quickly; however, and was able to clear the platform in order to open on Easter Monday. This weekend, more of our sites will open for the season including our heritage sites – Old Fort Erie, Laura Secord Homestead, Mackenzie Printery and McFarland House. This weekend is also Mother's Day – always a popular time to visit the Niagara Parkway to view the blossoming trees and flowers, especially here at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens. And of course, don't forget your Annual Parking Pass, a great last minute gift idea. Earlier this month, we joined the Niagara Parks Foundation in hosting an Earth Day celebration event at the Butterfly Conservatory on April 22. Thank you to Commissioners Dan LaCaprara and Ted Salci for attending. The event brought together donors, community partners and friends to celebrate the third anniversary of the Niagara Parks Foundation. We honoured the tree that was planted three years ago and planted a new tree outside, with a ceremony led by Nokimis Cindilee.. We also announced the upcoming Children's Garden

project and we were grateful to have staff and students from the Royal Oak Community School in Niagara-on-the-Lake in attendance. On April 24, David and I made a presentation to Niagara Regional Council, providing an update on upcoming strategic and capital projects. Earlier this week, I attended a press event for the Niagara Jazz Festival held at TAPS brewhouse in Niagara Falls to launch their upcoming season. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Niagara Jazz as we host their signature event at Oakes Garden Theatre on June 20. Next weekend is the Victoria Day long weekend and also the kickoff to the Falls Fireworks Series, followed by Memorial Day weekend. Our staff will be closely monitoring sales activity and key performance indicators over those two weekends, which we anticipate to provide a pretty good picture of what we can expect this year in terms of visitation. With that, we'll now continue with the rest of our public meeting."

**6. Approval of Draft Minutes**

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the minutes dated April 10, 2025 (COMM-2025-07).

Carried.

**7. Presentations**

Business Highlights

Niagara Parks CEO, David Adames, provided a presentation respecting Business Highlights.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Receive the Business Highlights presentation for information.

Carried.

**8. Items from Golf Committee**

David Adames provided an overview of Report 2025-42 respecting Special Olympics Ontario – 2025 Niagara Golf Program.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

Approve the recommendations as contained in Report 2025-51 Summary of Recommendations from the Golf Committee respecting the following matters:

- a) Special Olympics Ontario – 2025 Niagara Golf Program (Report 2025-42)
- b) Golf Department Updates (Memo 2025-24)
- c) Stanley Thompson Society (Memo 2025-25)

Carried.

**9. Items from Property and Infrastructure Committee**

Marcelo Gruosso provided a presentation respecting Niagara Parks' Capital Projects Update.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

Approve the recommendations as contained in Report 2022-52 Summary of Recommendations from the Property and Infrastructure Committee respecting the following matters:

- a) Gonder's Flats Wetland Restoration Project and Interpretive Plan Update (Report 2025-43)
- b) Soka Gakkai International of Canada Update (Report 2025-46)
- c) Capital Projects Update Presentation

Carried.

**10. Other Business**

Marcelo Gruosso provided information respecting the Niagara Parks Annual Parking Pass. The pass offers exceptional value and is sold for \$50. Niagara Parks offers a wide variety of parking options across the park to fit every need and budget including site specific annual passes.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday June 12, 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 Cotton:

That The Niagara Parks Commission move into Closed Session.

Carried.

The Commission moved into the Closed Session at 9:32 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

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

Staff: David Adames, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary to the Commission  
Marcelo Gruosso, Chief Operating Officer  
Paul Forcier, Police Chief  
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Bob Gale  
Chair

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David Adames  
Chief Executive Officer/  
Secretary to the Commission

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

May 8, 2025