



The Niagara Parks Commission

Minutes of the public meeting of The Niagara Parks Commission held on Thursday, September 18, 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 Dan La Caprara
Commissioner Ted Salci
Commissioner Erwin Wiens
- Regrets: Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe
Commissioner Wayne Redekop
- 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, Sales, Communications and Marketing
Laura Pingue, Chief Financial Officer
Katy Wassenaar, Sr. 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 Erwin:

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 September Public Commission Meeting. Looking back since our last meeting, we have had a busy and exciting few weeks, highlighted by the official grand opening of our newest attraction, Niagara Takes Flight. It has been wonderful to see the positive news coverage and the response from our guests has been sensational, the attraction has sold out multiple weekends. Thank you to all Commissioners for attending the Red Carpet Premiere event on August 27. What a proud evening that was as we celebrated with so many destination partners, stakeholders, community leaders, friends and family. As I said in my remarks that evening, I am exceptionally proud of the level of involvement and engagement from our Board on this project. Niagara Takes Flight will provide a fantastic new year-round experience for our guests and another reason to visit this destination. Looking back to the first part of August, I'd like to thank Commissioner Erwin Wiens and Commissioner Ted Salci for providing opening remarks at the Song to the Waters event at Queenston Heights Park on August 15 and 16. This event was held in partnership with the NPCA and included Indigenous musical performances, workshops and cultural activities. Last week, David had the unique opportunity of joining our Minister Stan Cho as part of an Ontario delegation presenting to travel media and tourism stakeholders in Japan and South Korea. The delegation also included the CEOs of Destination Toronto and Ottawa Tourism. For Niagara Parks, South Korea is our 6th largest international market and Japan is 10th. This underscores the importance of positioning our world-class experiences with tourism professionals in these markets. Last week on September 12, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the binational Niagara Falls Illumination Board.”

“A reception was hosted at Queen Victoria Place Restaurant where we gathered to enjoy the premiere of the new anniversary sound and light shows that were developed to mark the occasion. The special sound and light shows took place last Friday, Saturday and Sunday, at 8:30, 9:30 and 10:30pm, free to all guests viewing the illuminated Falls. On September 13, I attended a ceremony here at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens to celebrate the opening of a new Recognition Garden. The Recognition Garden provides a formal space to honour and recognize individuals, families and organizations who have contributed to shaping the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture and Botanical Gardens over their rich 90-year history. In Fort Erie, work has continued at the breakwall to restore damaged sections and install new in-water works as part of a shoreline protection pilot. The new stone was installed at a section of the breakwall that experiences the highest wave activity during storm events and is therefore most susceptible to damage. With the shoreline protection installed, the team will monitor how this holds up to winter storm events this season. Work is also underway to restore and realign sections of the Niagara River Recreation Trail in this area, with special care to ensure the trail remains open as much as possible to the public during construction. In the north, the Queenston boat ramp will be under construction next week for a period of two weeks to allow for much-needed improvements. At Queenston Heights Park, the federal government is investing \$1.1 million toward historic infrastructure improvements at the Brock’s Monument with work already underway. With that, we’ll now continue with the rest of our public meeting.”

6. Approval of Draft Minutes

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the minutes dated August 7, 2025 (COMM-2025-15).

Carried.

7. Presentations

Business Highlights

David Adames provided a presentation respecting Business Highlights.

Staff were asked to prepare reports for the Commission’s review regarding:

- a) Expanding the School of Horticulture (pros and cons)
- b) Operating a school for Golf Management

Commissioner Wiens advised that the Town of Niagara on the Lake hosted a cohort from the municipal sister city of Frankenmuth, Michigan on September 12 which included a visit to

Niagara Parks Power Station and a meal at Table Rock restaurant that was very well received.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Receive the Business Highlights presentation for information.

Carried.

8. Other Business

There were no items for other business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

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

10. Closed Session

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission move into Closed Session.

Carried.

The Commission moved into the Closed Session with the following persons in attendance:

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

Staff: David Adames, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary to the Commission
Marcelo Gruosso, Chief Operating Officer
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