

The Niagara Parks Commission

Minutes of the public meeting of The Niagara Parks Commission held on Thursday, November 13, 2025 at the School of Horticulture, 2565 Niagara Parkway, Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2E 6T2.

Attendance

Members: Chair Bob Gale
Vice Chair Graham Coveney (virtually)
Commissioner April Cotton
Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe
Commissioner Jim Diodati
Commissioner Tom Insinna
Commissioner Dan La Caprara
Commissioner Wayne Redekop
Commissioner Ted Salci
Commissioner Erwin Wiens (virtually)

Staff: David Adames, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary to the Commission
Marcelo Gruosso, Chief Operating Officer
Steve Barnhart, Senior Landscape Architect
Chris Giles, Director, Sales, Communications and Marketing
Laura Pingue, Chief Financial Officer
Janice Spino, Chief Human Resources Officer
Katy Wassenaar, Senior Manager, Public Relations
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 November Public Commission Meeting. Our staff are busy preparing for the launch of this year’s Winter Festival of Lights, which will open this Saturday. Presented by Niagara Falls Tourism, the festival will run until January 4, 2026, including 21 nights of fireworks, starting on weekends and then running nightly from December 25 to January 4. Many beloved light displays will return along with new interactive displays within Queen Victoria Park. This month, Niagara Parks also switched over to our shoulder season attractions pass – the Wonder Pass. New to this pass this year is Niagara Takes Flight, which offers guests yet another fantastic reason to visit Niagara Falls this winter. Looking back over the past few weeks, it’s been a busy time for events and visits, including hosting our Minister Stan Cho and Associate Minister Mohamed Firin on October 15, along with Consul Generals from Germany, Japan and Guatemala. There was also the official unveiling of the new renovations to the Niagara Falls Train Station on October 17. It was a pleasure to speak at the event about our contributions to the station and surrounding landscape, along with our longstanding partnership with Metrolinx to grow GO train ridership to Niagara. As of November 3, there is expanded weekend service to Niagara with four trains running on both Saturday and Sunday. While there is still much to do, this is a positive step forward in bringing more GO Train service to Niagara. That evening, I attended the Battle of Queenston Heights Commemorative Dinner at Queenston Heights Restaurant. Thank you to Commissioner Salci who also attended and thank you to Bob Cuipa, who chaired the committee and who spoke to the Commission about the event a few months back. On October 18, I attended and spoke at the graduation ceremony for our Niagara Parks School of Horticulture. It was a wonderful event and 14 graduates received their diplomas.”

“2026 represents the 90th anniversary of the School of Horticulture and it is fantastic to see the passion and determination of so many future horticulturalists. On Thursday, October 23, we unveiled a new peace monument at Locust Grove Park along the north Niagara Parkway. Thank you to Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Canada for this donation which is sure to become a thoughtful place of reflection for people of all walks of life. Thank you to David for emcee’ing the ceremony and Commissioner Salci for attending. The representatives from SGI were very appreciative of our staff’s work throughout this project, thank you to Steve Barnhart and his team for seeing this through. On October 25, Niagara Parks held our annual Community Tree Planting Day, made possible from donations through the Niagara Parks Foundation. Volunteers planted 800 trees at the planting site in front of Legends Golf Course. On Sunday, October 26, I welcomed those participating in the Niagara Falls Marathon, bright and early at Rapidsview Park. There were approximately 4,000 runners total between the marathon, half-marathon, 10km and 5km events. On November 2, I was pleased to welcome Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose Victor Chan-Gonzaga and Consul General Salle, along with staff members who visited the new Dr. Rizal monument in Queen Victoria Park. I also had the chance to take the delegation on Niagara Takes Flight. This past Saturday, we hosted the Indigenous Veterans ceremony at the Landscape of Nations Memorial at Queenston Heights Park. Thank you to Commissioner Salci for speaking on my behalf. 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 DeWolfe and seconded by Commissioner Insinna:

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Approve the minutes dated October 9, 2025 (COMM-2025-19).

Carried.

7. Presentations

Bob Cuipa, Queenston Dinner Committee, sent regrets and plans to provide an update presentation at a future Commission meeting.

Adaptive Golf at Niagara Parks

Chris Garner, Adaptive Golf Instructor at Legends Golf Academy, provided a presentation respecting Adaptive Golf at Niagara Parks. Chris was asked to provide his feedback respecting additional avenues to promote the Adaptive Golf Program. Chair Gale invited Curtis Labelle, Director, Golf Operations, to provide brief comments respecting Niagara Parks Golf 2026 programming.

Business Highlights

David Adames provided a presentation respecting Business Highlights.

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

That The Niagara Parks Commission:

1. Receive the presentations respecting Adaptive Golf at Niagara Parks and Business Highlights 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 December 11, 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 Commissioner La Caprara and seconded by Commissioner Insinna:

That The Niagara Parks Commission moved into the Closed Session.

Carried.

The Niagara Parks Commission moved into the Closed Session at 9:34 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Members:

- Chair Bob Gale
- Vice Chair Graham Coveney (virtually)
- Commissioner April Cotton
- Commissioner Spencer DeWolfe
- Commissioner Jim Diodati
- Commissioner Tom Insinna
- Commissioner Dan La Caprara
- Commissioner Wayne Redekop
- Commissioner Ted Salci
- Commissioner Erwin Wiens (virtually)



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Chair

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November 13, 2025