



**NIAGARA
PARKS**

Niagara Parks Update

Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Presentation by Chair Bob Gale and CEO David Adames



Niagara Parks

- Founded in 1885
- Operates under the Niagara Parks Act
- Two founding principles:
 - Niagara Parks would never be a burden to the taxpayers of Ontario
 - Niagara Parks would as much as possible, be free to enjoy
- Board-governed operational enterprise under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
- 12 Member Board: Chair: Bob Gale; Vice-Chair Graham Coveney; Town of NOTL is represented by Deputy Lord Mayor Erwin Wiens
- **Mandate:** To be the environmental and cultural stewards of the Niagara River Corridor
- **Vision:** To be one of the most spectacular parks in the world



Operations and Funding

- One of the region's largest employers; 2,000 projected headcount for this year; \$70+ million payroll.
- Operating budget covers payroll, operating expenses to run its revenue-producing operations and key operational projects.
- Capital budget covers investments into deferred maintenance and strategic capital projects to enhance Niagara Parks' visitor experiences.
 - \$175 million worth of deferred maintenance across Niagara Parks sites
 - Major capital projects for 2025-26:
 - Opening brand-new attraction at Table Rock Centre, *Niagara Takes Flight*





Environmental Stewardship

- Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program Certification at Legends on the Niagara
- MOU's with Brock University, Forests Ontario and Canadian Wildlife Federation
- Collaboration with Vineland Research and Innovation Centre
 - New soil analysis program to enhance tree planting efforts
- Niagara College Ecosystem Restoration Program
- Invasive Species Management Strategy
 - Annual Prescribed Burn Program
- Develop alternative shoreline protection strategy for the breakwall to improve the resiliency of the shoreline and adjacent parklands
- Improvements to Visitor Experience and Ecology at Dufferin Islands





Environmental Stewardship

- Environmental Stewardship Action Plan 2020-2030
- Gonder's Flats
 - Niagara's largest wetland restoration site
 - Green Grazers: Sustainable land management strategy using goats from a local farm
 - Next steps: adding interpretation to improve public use and understanding of the site
- Coastal Wetland Restoration
 - Targeting 75% of shoreline to be covered in native vegetation to prevent erosion, provide wildlife habitat and improve water quality
- Chippawa Grassland Bird Habitat Project
 - Restored grassland habitat has seen the return of both the Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark
- Urban Forestry Management Strategy
 - Community Tree Planting Day held in Fort Erie (2023, 2024)
- Pollinator Garden Route
 - 12 gardens across Niagara Parks that support pollinator species



Cultural Stewardship

- Heritage Sites
 - Old Fort Erie
 - Mackenzie Printery
 - Laura Secord Homestead
 - McFarland House
 - Landscape of Nations Memorial
- Special events (Valour and Victory Indigenous Veterans Ceremony, Chippawa Battlefield Ceremony, Siege of Old Fort Erie Battle Re-enactment National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)
- Partnership with TD Niagara Jazz Festival
 - Flagship event at Oakes Garden Theatre
- Explore the Niagara collaborative initiative with Parks Canada and bordering municipalities
 - Highlight sites, experiences, events related to themes of Black History, Indigenous culture, nation-building, nature & gardens, active living
- Published Landscape of Nations: Beyond the Mist, a new book that provides an unprecedented exploration of Indigenous presence in Niagara.

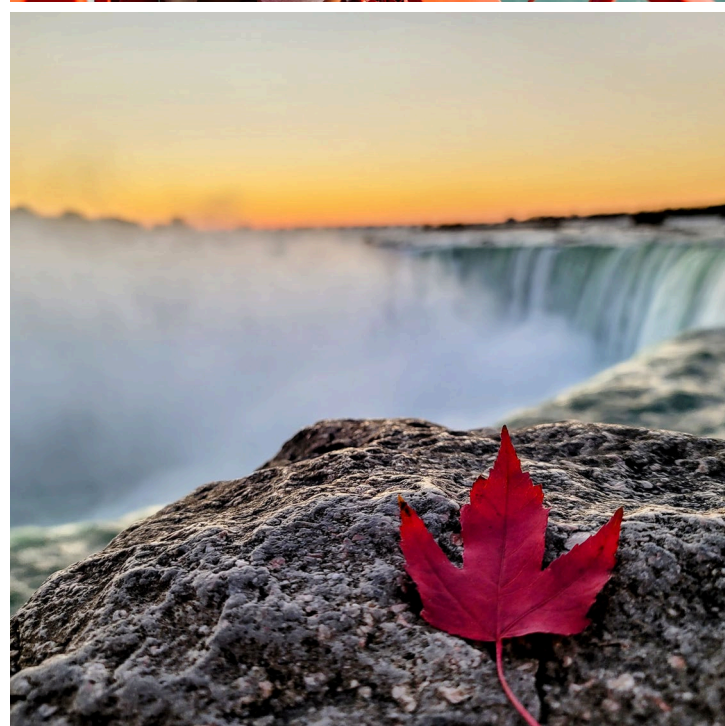
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Tourism Landscape

- Niagara Parks is closely monitoring internal key performance indicators (sales performance, web traffic, online store) as well as external research and data to understand potential shifts in tourism activity as a result of geopolitical tensions.
- The US is an exceptionally important market for Niagara Parks.
- Spending summary for 2024-25 at Niagara Parks:
 - 42% Domestic
 - 42% US
 - 16% International
 - Avg \$55 per transaction for US guests vs \$34 for domestic.
- Additional domestic flight capacity, including daily flights into Hamilton.
- Strength of US dollar anticipated to mitigate some potential impacts to US travel sentiment to Canada, while further motivating Canadians to travel domestically.
 - US spending at Niagara Parks was down to start the year, but we are seeing growth in online sales and web traffic.
 - Promising growth in both domestic and especially international spending that has offset any losses from the US market.





Niagara Parks Response

- Niagara Parks continues to promote a positive and welcoming message to all guests, including proactive messaging specifically for guests traveling from the US.
- At the same time, Niagara Parks is leveraging its experiences and offerings that are uniquely Canadian.
 - Bucket-list worthy experiences that should be included in anyone's Canadian travel plans
 - Focus on recent investments to improve the guest experience at Table Rock Centre, Niagara Parks Power Station + Tunnel and NEW Attraction opening
 - New Friendship Arch sculpture installed at Table Rock to promote guest engagement and activation of the space.
 - Feast ON certification at restaurants, support of local food and drink
 - Local products in retail stores
 - Connection to Canadian themes, patriotism, history and nation-building
- Continue to nurture international markets including through in-market representation in the UK, Germany and Mexico.
- Align messaging with Destination Canada, Destination Ontario and other key tourism organizations.

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Capital Projects

2025 Highlights

North Parks (Niagara-on-the-Lake): \$3.5 million within capital budget

- New Tennis and Pickleball Courts at Queenston Heights Park
 - Upgrades include new retail store and updated public washrooms
 - Courts open for play as of June 21
 - Online booking system including single-use and season's passes
- Niagara River Recreation Trail Pedestrian bridge replacement (Line 3)
 - Full replacement of aging bridge structure completed in May
- Niagara River Recreation Trail upgrades near Brown's Point
 - Popular section of the rec trail replaced due to issues with tree roots under the asphalt and reported trips and falls in the vicinity.
- Upgrades at Whirlpool Golf Course
 - Restoration plan to bring course closer to the original Stanley Thompson design
 - New irrigation system, enhancements to cart paths and parking lot
 - New Whirlpool Pub & Lounge



Queenston Courts

- New tennis and pickleball courts now open at Queenston Heights Park as of June 21.
- Final upgrades continuing over next few weeks (shade structures, wind screens, completion of new public washrooms).
- Bookings can be made online and in-person (first-come, first-serve).
- Single-use and season passes available.
- niagaraparks.com/courts





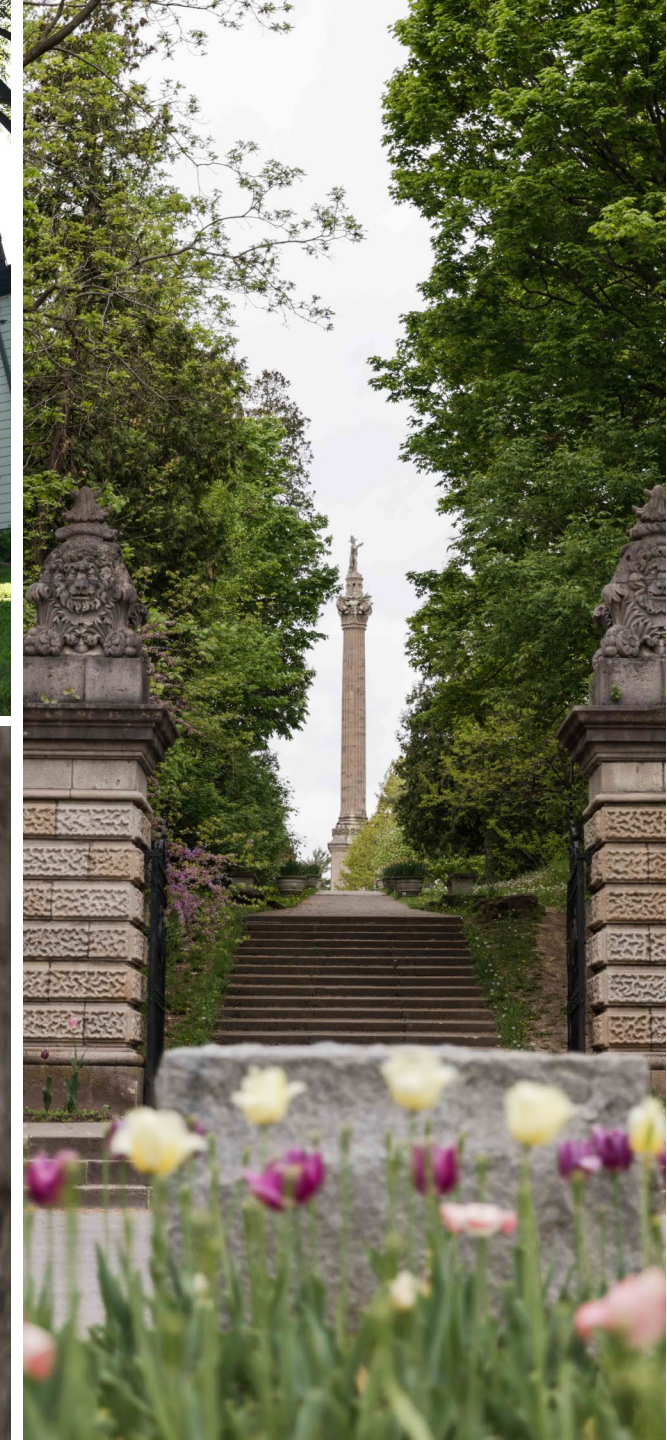
Connections and Collaborations

- WEGO Transit Service
 - Seasonal shuttle service to NOTL
 - Connects guests traveling into Niagara via GO Transit
- Table Rock Bistro + Wine Bar
 - Promotes Niagara's wine story to the global audience that visits Table Rock Centre
 - Guests from 169 different countries visited Niagara Parks last year.
 - Carries over 60 VQA wines from 35 Niagara wineries
 - Hosts wineries and breweries for featured tasting events on summer weekends
- Partnership with Niagara College
 - Joint initiatives with School of Hospitality (NOTL Campus)



Connections and Collaborations

- Explore the Niagara collaboration to promote trip-planning experiences that celebrate Indigenous and Black history, nation-building, active living and nature.
- Heritage Trail Pass includes admission to Niagara Parks heritage sites and Parks Canada sites Fort George and Brock's Monument.
- McFarland House
 - Heritage site also offers afternoon tea service.
 - Annual participation in NOTL Rotary Holiday House Tour (decorated by Garden Club of Niagara)





Benefits to Local Residents

- Numerous economic, social, cultural, environmental benefits for local residents.
- Free parks, garden spaces, nature trails including the 53-km Niagara River Recreation Trail
 - Free parkettes along the Niagara Parkway (outside of core tourism area)
- Free programming and special events
 - \$50 annual parking pass and annual attraction passes geared toward local residents
 - Annual Winter Festival of Lights
 - Past host-site of Niagara Falls annual New Year's Eve celebration
 - Falls Fireworks Series





Coming Soon: New Attraction Opening

- On August 29, Niagara Parks will open Ontario's newest must-see attraction, *Niagara Takes Flight: A Soaring Adventure*.
- Only the second flyover experience to open in Canada.
- \$25 million investment from Niagara Parks earned revenue.
- Replacement of a previous attraction (Niagara's Fury) that had reached the end of its lifecycle.
- Niagara Parks' new attraction will feature dynamic pre-show areas with Indigenous storytelling and famous moments in popular culture.
- Working with industry leaders Brogent Technologies, FORREC attraction consultants, Great Lakes Scenic Studios and Nova film productions.
- Experience will take guests on a soaring adventure across breathtaking landscapes, epic battle scenes, lush gardens and rolling vineyards.
 - State-of-the-art drone footage will offer views of Niagara Falls, the Niagara Gorge and Niagara Whirlpool like never before.



Redevelopment of Toronto Power

- Niagara Parks is proud to have received approval from the Government of Ontario for the upcoming redevelopment of the historic Toronto Power Generating Station by Pearle Hospitality.
- Construction planning is now underway.
 - Roof rehabilitation work
 - Cofferdam will be required for riverside construction (window from DFO beginning in July)
- Toronto Power Hotel will become Niagara Parks' newest tenant while ownership of the lands will remain with the Commission.
- Highlights of the redevelopment plan:
 - Several free indoor and outdoor public viewing areas
 - Niagara Falls' first five-star boutique accommodation
 - Free public art gallery and museum
 - Theatre space
 - Variety of culinary options (restaurants, cafe, bars and lounges, craft brewery)
- The new Toronto Power Hotel will elevate the entire destination of Niagara Falls, attracting a new higher-end market, while also providing numerous benefits for local residents.



Sustainable Tourism Growth

- Over the last few years, Niagara Parks has been challenged with managing increasing volumes of vehicles and pedestrians within a small geographic area by the Falls (Queen Victoria Park).
 - 4.5 km from Kingsbridge Park to Oakes Garden Theatre
- With new and improved experiences coming online, visitation has continued to grow, with more planned in the next few years:
 - Niagara Parks Power Station (2021)
 - Niagara Takes Flight attraction (2025)
 - \$220 million private-sector redevelopment of Toronto Power (2028)
- Table Rock door counters measure between 35,000 and 40,000 people during peak days in the summer.
- Congestion at the Falls impacts the guest experience; limiting movement and detracting from the visual beauty.
- Niagara Parks Police Service regularly implements road closures to protect public safety.
 - Road closure zone: Clifton Hill to Fraser Hill
 - Peak holiday weekends roads are closed Saturday and Sunday beginning at 7pm



Sustainable Tourism Growth

- **Vision:** strengthen the visitor experience, create a buffer between pedestrian areas and the noise/distraction of vehicular areas.
- Through a phased approach, Niagara Parks will be implementing changes within Queen Victoria Park to establish a more walkable/cycle-friendly and parklike experience.
 - Following Parkway resurfacing (April 22-May 9), additional temporary jersey barriers were installed to expand the pedestrian walkway from Murray Street to Clifton Hill.
- Prioritize access based on the following hierarchy that can best accommodate increased visitor volumes and generate revenues:
 - Pedestrians / Niagara River Recreation Trail connectivity
 - WEGO bus system
 - Private shuttles
 - Private vehicles

Examples:

- Preliminary: flexible interventions like paint and barriers
- Long-term: permanent changes to pedestrianize Queen Victoria Park, while maintaining WEGO bus and emergency access

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Niagara Parks Foundation

- The Niagara Parks Foundation was launched in the spring of 2022.
- A registered charity governed by a Board of Directors established to support and advance the environmental and cultural stewardship initiatives of Niagara Parks

2024 Highlights

- Completed year two of three-year project to support stewardship work at Dufferin Islands (\$400,000 investment by TD Bank)
- Over \$40,000 raised through Toonies for Trees program for tree planting (7,351 trees planted across Niagara Parks in 2024)
- Supported the launch of a new Indigenous audio tour at the Niagara Glen, *Rekindling All Our Relations*





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TREES FOR LIFE

Trees for Life Grant \$70,000

- Niagara Parks Foundation's Toonies for Trees point-of-sale donation program has steadily grown, raising over \$40,000 in 2024.
- The Niagara Parks Foundation is grateful to receive a grant through Trees for Life that will match \$70,000 toward tree planting in 2025-26 (estimated 5,000 trees).
- This will help the program's impact extend even further to support tree planting at Niagara Parks.
- In 2024, 7,351 trees were planted across Niagara Parks properties.
 - Funds raised through Toonies for Trees supported the parks in exceeding the annual tree planting goal by over 50%.



Niagara Community Foundation \$20,000

- The Foundation is proud to receive \$20,000 in funding from the Niagara Community Foundation's 2025 Environmental Grant.
- The funding will support restoration work along the moraine including the removal of invasive species and planting over 7,500 native plants.

Announcement from NCF [here](#)





Coming Soon: The Children's Garden at Niagara Parks

- Niagara Parks is collaborating with the Niagara Parks Foundation to build Niagara's first Children's Garden at the Botanical Gardens.
- Two-acre garden space filled with interactive nature-based play areas inviting children of all ages and abilities to connect with nature in a safe environment.
- Concept designs have been prepared and we are currently in the research and development phase:
 - Focus groups with local educators and faculty from Brock University
 - Royal Oak School consulted in Feb 2025
 - Activation with children and families during March Break
 - Public engagement survey available online
 - Consulting and engaging with Indigenous communities
 - Groups/organizations to inform accessibility and inclusion considerations
- Construction to begin in spring 2026.



Questions and Comments

Thank you for your time today. We welcome any questions and/or comments about today's presentation!