



Lord Mayor's Report – April 2026

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa

As we approach the end of this Council term, this will be my final Lord Mayor's Report before the upcoming election period. Over the past four years, it has been an honour to serve the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake and to highlight the many activities, milestones, and community contributions that shape our Town.

March 2026

March 26 – **Start Me Up Niagara "Compassion in Action Tour"** – I had the opportunity to attend the Compassion in Action Tour hosted by Start Me Up Niagara at Cornerstone Church. This mobile outreach initiative provides essential items such as clothing, footwear, and hygiene supplies to individuals experiencing low income, housing instability, and other challenges. It was meaningful to see firsthand the impact of this program and the dedication of the volunteers and community partners who work to support vulnerable members of our community. Thank you to Start Me Up Niagara for bringing this important service to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

March 26 - **Unveiling of Former Regional Chair Jim Bradley Portrait, Niagara Region Headquarters** – I was also pleased to attend the unveiling of the official portrait of former Niagara Regional Chair Jim Bradley at Niagara Regional Headquarters. The ceremony, held prior to the Regional Council meeting, recognized Mr. Bradley's remarkable 55-year career in public service, including his tenure as Regional Chair and as a long-serving Member of Provincial Parliament for St. Catharines. It was a fitting tribute to his legacy of leadership, collaboration, and dedication to the Niagara community.

March 27 - **StopGap Ramp Program Ribbon Cutting and 2026 Application Launch** - I was pleased to host a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the installation of StopGap ramps at participating businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and to announce the opening of applications for the 2026 StopGap Ramp Program. This initiative helps remove physical barriers by providing portable ramps to improve accessibility at storefront entrances. It was encouraging to see the positive impact these ramps are already having in supporting a more inclusive and welcoming environment for residents and visitors. I encourage eligible businesses to apply and take part in this important initiative. For more information, visit our website www.notl.com.

March 28 – **Brian James Ferguson Sr. 80th Birthday Celebration** - I was glad to attend and bring greetings to celebrate the 80th birthday of Brian James Ferguson Sr. at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre. I extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Ferguson and wish him continued health and happiness in the years ahead.

April 2026

April 2 - **Dandor Estate Winery Grand Opening** - Although I was unable to attend the official grand opening due to unforeseen delays, I had the opportunity to visit Dandor



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Estate Winery over the weekend following the event. I extend my congratulations to Lilia and Alexei Bodistean and wish them every success in this new venture.

April 7 - **MB Country Living "Chick Day"** - I attended a Chick Day event hosted by MB Country Living in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where customers gathered to pick up pre-ordered poultry and connect with others in the local backyard chicken community. The event highlighted the growing interest in urban agriculture and sustainable food practices across the region. It was interesting to learn that, according to the 2023 Niagara Agricultural Profile (a report prepared for the Niagara Region Planning and Economic Development Committee), agriculture overall contributes \$1.71 billion to the Niagara regional GDP. At 12% of this value, egg and poultry production contributes over \$200 million annually to the Niagara regional GDP. This information is on the heels of unprecedented growth in 2021, so these percentages hold true (+/-3%) even if the financial value changes.

April 11 - **St. Davids Chocolates Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting** - I attended the grand opening and ribbon cutting for St. Davids Chocolates, a new retail shop in St. Davids. I extend my congratulations to the owners and wish them every success as they welcome the community into their new space.

April 19 - **Karen Madene Gansel Short Fiction Award Ceremony** - I attended and brought greetings to the Karen Madene Gansel Short Fiction Award Ceremony hosted by the Canadian Authors Association at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre. This inaugural event, held in memory of Karen Gansel, recognized her lasting contributions to both the local community and the Canadian literary landscape. It was a meaningful occasion to honour her legacy and celebrate emerging writers from across the country. I extend my thanks to the organizers and to Ken Gansel for establishing this award in her memory.

April 20 - **Urban Net-Zero Implementation Seminar** - I attended and spoke at the Urban Net-Zero Implementation Seminar in Toronto, hosted by the Urban Economy Forum at the World Urban Pavilion. In my remarks, I focused on the practical implementation of net-zero objectives at the municipal level, emphasizing how planning, infrastructure, and long-term asset management decisions shape emissions outcomes, and the importance of aligning municipal policy with real estate market dynamics to ensure achievable, long-term results. The seminar brought together leaders across government, industry, and academia to explore collaboration, including the introduction of the Net-Zero Cities Hub framework, and reinforced the role of municipalities in advancing climate action within the built environment.

April 22 - **Administrative Professionals Day** - I was pleased to bring greetings in recognition of Administrative Professionals Day and to acknowledge the important contributions of administrative staff across the organization and region. Their professionalism, dedication, and attention to detail play a critical role in supporting



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effective operations and service delivery. I extend my sincere appreciation to all administrative professionals for their ongoing commitment and hard work.

April 22 - **Niagara River Lions "Mesh Refresh Tour"** - I joined representatives from the Niagara River Lions during their 2026 Mesh Refresh Tour stop at Virgil Sports Park. The initiative included the installation of new metal netting and community programming such as skills demonstrations and opportunities for youth to engage directly with the team. This event highlighted the importance of accessible recreational spaces and promoting sport within our community. I encourage residents to come out and attend a Niagara River Lions game this season and support this exciting local team.

April 22 - **Niagara District Airport Annual General Meeting** – I attended the Niagara District Airport Annual General Meeting, where updates were shared on the airport's operations, performance, and plans. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear from leadership and stakeholders about the continued role of the airport as a key regional asset supporting economic development, connectivity, and growth across Niagara.

April 23 - **Conversations on Global Health: Impact & Inspiration** - I attended Conversations on Global Health: Impact & Inspiration, a moderated discussion hosted by Nyanyas of Niagara in support of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. The event brought together community members and leaders for an engaging conversation on global health challenges and solutions, with insights from distinguished speakers, including the Honourable Bob Rae. It was a meaningful opportunity to support an important cause and to reflect on the role of collaboration in addressing global and local health issues.

April 26 - **60th Anniversary of Jamaica's Participation in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program** - I was invited to attend a commemorative event marking the 60th anniversary of Jamaica's participation in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program; however, I was unable to attend. The Deputy Lord Mayor Wiens attended the event and presented a certificate on behalf of the Town. This celebration recognized the longstanding contributions of Jamaican agricultural workers to Canada's agricultural sector and the important role they have played in supporting farms and food production across our region. It was a meaningful opportunity to acknowledge this enduring partnership and to celebrate the workers, employers, and communities connected through the program.

April 26 - **Red Roof Retreat Annual Pasta Dinner Fundraiser** - I attended the annual Pasta Dinner in support of Red Roof Retreat, a signature community fundraiser dedicated to supporting children, youth, and young adults with special needs. The event brought together residents, volunteers, and local partners for an evening of connection, generosity, and fundraising through dinner and auction activities. It was inspiring to see the strong community support for Red Roof Retreat and the important programs they provide to families across Niagara.



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Upcoming Events

- **May 21** - Leadership Luncheon – Canadian Edition hosted by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce. I will be joining Canadian and U.S. leaders, including MP Fred Davies, MP Tony Baldinelli, and New York State Senator Robert Ort, for a discussion on cross-border collaboration and issues impacting our local economies. For more information, visit the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce website.
- **June** – The annual Strawberry Social will be returning this June. Date and full details coming soon. This beloved community event celebrates our Seniors. Updates will be posted on our website www.notl.com and our social media channels.

Staff Announcement

Congratulations to Devin Sartor on his secondment to the role of Facilities Coordinator, effective April 6, 2026. This will support continued operational excellence across our facilities while enabling progress on the facilities' key priorities.