



**NIAGARA  
PARKS**

# Niagara Parks Update

Overview for Town of Fort Erie Council

Presentation by Chair Bob Gale and CEO David Adames



# Your Presenters

- Niagara Parks Chair, Bob Gale
- Niagara Parks CEO, David Adames







# Niagara Parks

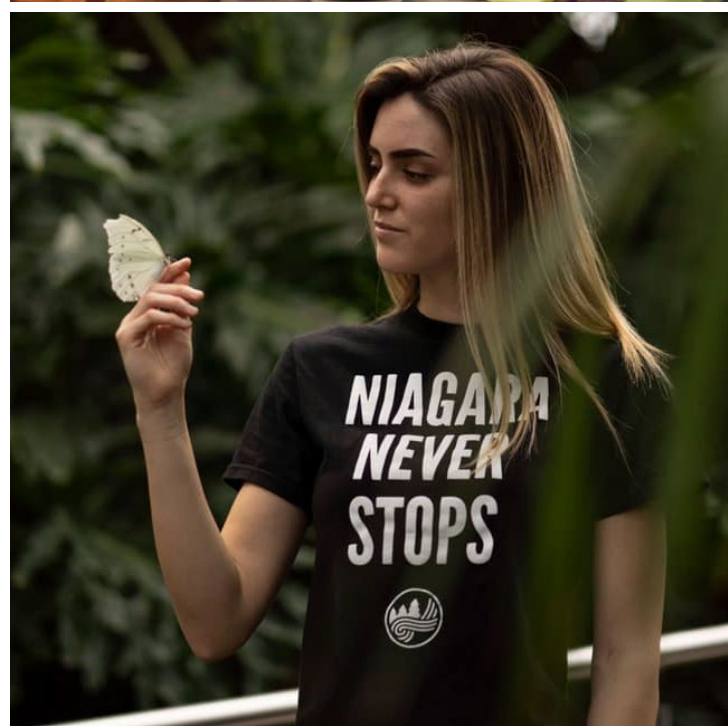
- Founded in 1885
- Operates under the Niagara Parks Act
- Two founding principles:
  - Niagara Parks would never be a burden to the taxpayers of Ontario
  - Niagara Parks would as much as possible, be free to enjoy
- Board-governed operational enterprise under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming
- 12 Member Board: Chair: Bob Gale; Town of Fort Erie is represented by Mayor Redekop and Regional Councillor Tom Insinna
- **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





# Funding and Operations

- 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 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 Flying Theatre attraction at Table Rock Centre







# Stewards of the Niagara River Corridor

- Niagara Parks is a key demand generator, driving visitation and tourism to Niagara and Ontario.
- Operates its own revenue-producing products, services and experiences (including attractions, full-service restaurants, quick-service food outlets, retail stores, heritage sites, golf courses, and numerous parking and transportation services) and third-party partners (most recently Pearle Hospitality, Niagara City Cruises, Niagara Adventure Excursions, Digital Attractions).
- Responsible for maintaining 56km Niagara Parkway and 53km recreation trail, numerous parks, gardens and natural areas.
- Breadth of services include Niagara Parks Police Service, School of Horticulture.
- Re-established Niagara Parks Foundation focuses on raising funds to support additional environmental and cultural stewardship projects.







HOUSE BRANDS

ATTRACTIONS

NATURE + GARDENS

HERITAGE

CULINARY

GOLF

SHOPS

WEDDINGS

SUB-BRANDS

Journey Behind the Falls  
 Butterfly Conservatory  
 Niagara Parks Power Station + The Tunnel  
 Currents: Sound & Light Show  
 Whirlpool Aero Car  
 White Water Walk  
 Niagara's Fury  
 .....  
 Niagara City Cruises  
 WildPlay Zipline to the Falls  
 WildPlay Whirlpool Adventure Course

Botanical Gardens  
 Centennial Lilac Gardens  
 Dufferin Islands  
 Floral Clock  
 Floral Showhouse  
 Niagara Glen  
 Niagara Glen Nature Centre & Nature Exchange  
 Niagara Recreational Trail  
 Oakes Garden Theatre  
 Paradise Grove  
 Queen Victoria Park  
 Queenston Heights Park  
 School of Horticulture

Battle of Chippawa Memorial Site  
 Landscape of Nations  
 Laura Secord Homestead  
 Mackenzie Printery  
 Mather Arch  
 McFarland House  
 Old Fort Erie

Table Rock House Restaurant  
 Legends on the Niagara Clubhouse  
 Queen Victoria Place Restaurant  
 Queenston Heights Restaurant  
 Whirlpool Restaurant  
 Fast Casual Restaurants  
 • Table Rock Market: BREW, SWIRL, SPROUT, FLAME, SLICE  
 • Grand View Restaurant  
 • Garden Café  
 • Queen Victoria Place Café

Legends on the Niagara  
 Whirlpool Golf Course

Attraction Shops  
 Grand View Gift Shop  
 Queen Victoria Place Gift Shop  
 Table Rock Shop

Ceremonies and Receptions  
 Social Events



TABLE ROCK HOUSE  
 RESTAURANT

QUEENSTON HEIGHTS  
 RESTAURANT | EST 1900







# 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, Annual Siege of Fort Erie Battle Re-enactment, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)
- 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
- Hundreds of plaques, markers, monuments all along 56-kilometre Niagara River corridor







## 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.
- 43% of total visitor spending at Niagara Parks in 2024 came from US (vs 41% domestic)
  - Avg \$55 per transaction for US guests vs \$34 for domestic.
- Ipsos poll: 56% of Canadians are ready to cancel or avoid US travel in response to trade tensions.
- Strength of US dollar likely to mitigate some potential impacts to US travel sentiment to Canada, while further motivating Canadians to travel domestically.
- Additional domestic flight capacity, including daily flights into Hamilton.
- However, economic uncertainty on both sides of the border, could impact discretionary spending, including desire to travel.





# Niagara Parks Response

- Niagara Parks will continue 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 will continue to leverage 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
  - Feast ON certification at restaurants, support of local food and drink
  - Local products in retail stores
  - Connection to Canadian history and nation-building
    - Planning an expanded Siege of Fort Erie battle re-enactment in 2026 with additional programming
- 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.







# What's New in 2025

## COMING SOON: Niagara Parks' Newest Attraction to Open this Summer

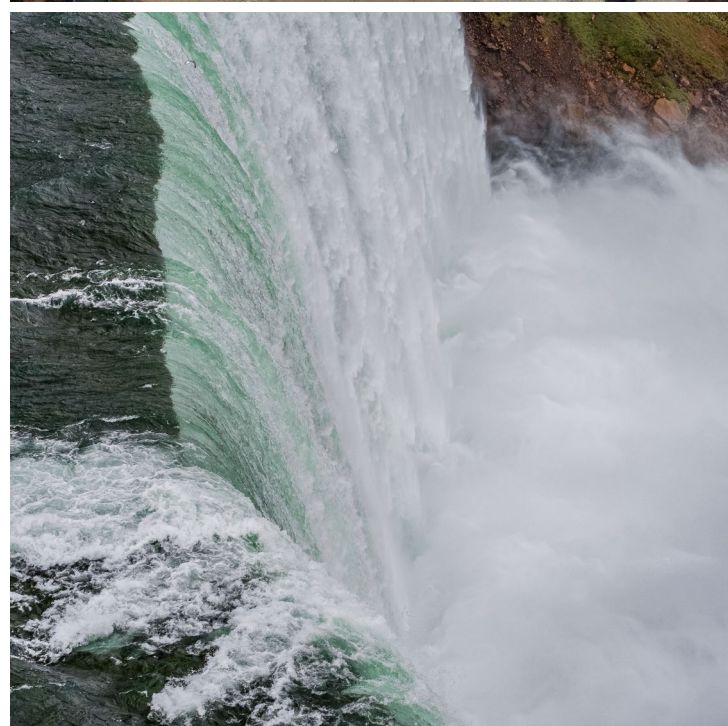
- Flying Theatre attraction will open on the top floor of Table Rock Centre

## Niagara Parks Power Station + Tunnel

- New limited-time educational exhibit, Tesla: A Spark of Genius

## Niagara Parks Golf

- Niagara Parks has made significant investments to improve both the playability and long-term sustainability of its golf courses
- **Legends on the Niagara**
  - Replacing and upgrading cart paths (Battlefield to be completed this year)
- **Whirlpool Golf Course**
  - Replacing and upgrading cart paths
  - Restoration work to return the course to its original Stanley Thompson design







## Spotlight: New Attraction Opening

- Later this summer, Niagara Parks' will open Ontario's newest must-see attraction.
- 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.
- 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.





# Niagara Parks Marina

- Niagara Parks is committed to establishing the marina at Miller's Creek as a new waterfront destination along the south Niagara Parkway.
- This year, Niagara Parks will be investing \$1.1 million to repair and update key infrastructure, including electrical service ahead of the 2025 boating season.
- Niagara Parks will continue to assess options for the redevelopment of the marina.
- Updates will continue to be shared with Fort Erie Council and through the Town's representatives on the Board, along with current marina slipholders.





# Capital Projects

## 2024 Highlights

- Replacement of the Black Creek Bridge (over \$3 million)
- Breakwall restoration:
  - \$2.2 million invested to replace 900 metres
- Road resurfacing:
  - Completed service roads 2, 3, 16 and 27

## 2025 Capital Planning (proposed \$5.3 million)

- Breakwall restoration:
  - \$1.8 million investment to repair additional section of the breakwall, including new in-water works to support further resiliency
- Marina
  - \$1.1 million for upgrades including electrical servicing infrastructure
- Road resurfacing and improvements
  - Mather's Park Trail realignment
  - Sections of south Niagara Parkway
  - Service Road 20 & 30





# Niagara Parks Foundation

- The Niagara Parks Foundation was relaunched 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).
- Supported the launch of a new Indigenous audio tour at the Niagara Glen, *Rekindling All Our Relations*.







# Tree Planting

## Urban Forestry Management Plan

- Niagara Parks aims to establish a 35% tree canopy by 2028.
- A healthy tree canopy helps to mitigate environmental impacts of climate change and improve the resiliency of our natural areas.
- Goal of planting 5,000 trees each year
  - Exceeded by over 2,000 trees the past two years

## Toonies for Trees

- Niagara Parks Foundation program at Niagara Parks point-of-sale locations.
- Over \$40,000 raised in 2024 (funds matched through new Trees for Life grant).

## Community Tree Planting Day

- Niagara Parks' annual Community Tree Planting Day held in Fort Erie in 2023 and 2024.
- Funded through the Toonies for Trees program, invites members of the community, students, volunteers to join a local reforestation project.





## Foundation Spotlight: Interpreting the Old Fort (1764 Site)

- Priority project of the Niagara Parks Foundation.
- The remains of the original 1764 fort (oldest British Army fort in Ontario) lay just east of Old Fort Erie.
- Site of an archeological dig by Wilfred Laurier University in 2019.
- Through the Foundation, Niagara Parks plans to preserve the site and interpret it for the public to help tell the story of the original fort.
- Aligns with future plans to further animate Old Fort Erie and expand the guest experience at this important heritage site.

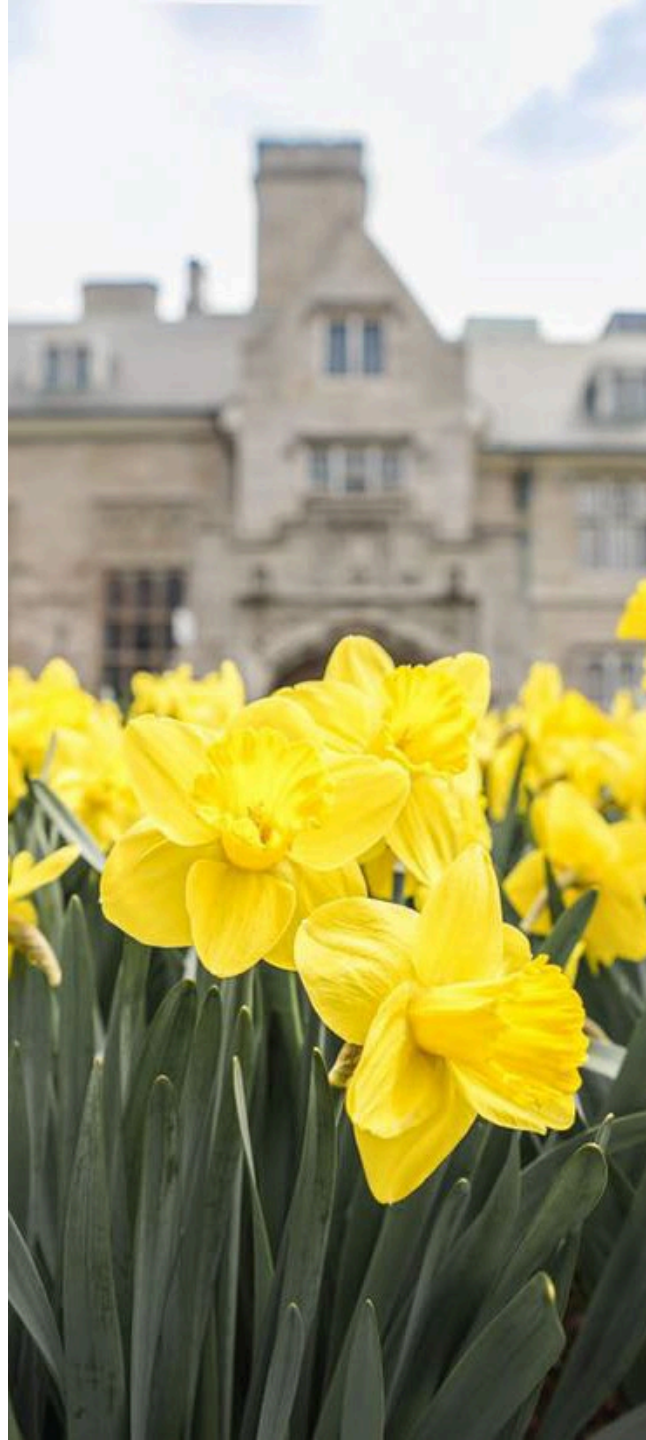




## Coming Soon: The Children's Garden at Niagara Parks

- Niagara Parks is collaborating with the Niagara Parks Foundation to build Niagara's first Children's Garden at the Botanical Gardens.
- This will be 2-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 engaging with potential donors and gathering feedback:
  - Focus groups with local school boards and faculty from Brock University
  - 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!