

**Ministry of Heritage,
Sport, Tourism and
Culture Industries**

Minister

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**Ministère des Industries du
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tourisme et de la culture**

Ministre

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January 24, 2022

Ms. April Jeffs
Chair
Niagara Parks Commission
PO Box 150, Administration Building, Oak Hall
7400 Portage Road South
Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6T2

2022-23 Mandate Letter

Dear Ms. Jeffs:

Thank you for taking on the role of Chair of the Board of Commissioners of the Niagara Parks Commission. Your team's work contributes to a spectacular double bottom line in Ontario, reflecting our rich cultural fabric and contributing to our economic success.

I often say Ontario offers the world in one province. The Niagara Parks Commission is an exemplary tourism experience, making our jobs in the ministry – showcasing Ontario and attracting visitors – easier. The important work you are doing provides truly unique opportunities for residents and visitors to explore and discover.

I recognize your work with Landscape of Nations 360 – including the delivery of a virtual speaker series in June 2021 celebrating National Indigenous History Month – as an example of your positive community engagement. Please continue to work with partners to meet the needs of your communities and fulfil your mandate.

I would also like to congratulate you on the opening of the first phase of the Niagara Parks Power Station in July 2021. I was pleased to support this exciting new attraction and demand generator for the Niagara Parks Commission and look forward to being kept apprised of your continued success with this endeavour and your plans for the remaining power stations.

As you develop your business objectives, performance goals and other activities for the coming year, I ask that you consider a number of key government priorities.

The heritage, sport, tourism and culture sectors were the first hit by the triple threat of health, economic and social crises posed by COVID-19, and there has been an unprecedented and devastating impact on the ministry's agencies and their operations. Together, we've worked to protect and support our sectors. We've reinforced the work of

the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee and spotlighted our sectors' challenges at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Our joint efforts will help inform the next phase of the government's plan to responsibly restart the economy.

In December 2020, my ministry released *Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-emerging as a Global Leader*, a white paper that discusses medium- and long-term strategies for the recovery of the heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries. After releasing the white paper, we arranged roundtable sessions with you and your agency's CEO in April and October 2021 to discuss collaborative, agency-led initiatives in support of recovery. I appreciated hearing about your successes and plans, and that you are exploring opportunities to further work with your fellow agencies and attractions.

I also established a Tourism Economic Recovery Ministerial Task Force to provide actionable guidance on the strategies, tactics and approaches the government should consider when supporting the tourism industry's economic recovery in Ontario. We need to be, and we will be, ready to welcome the world back to our province.

As part of the government of Ontario, please work with your agency's CEO to act in the best interests of Ontarians by being efficient, effective, and providing value for money to taxpayers. Our government's primary focus is to protect every life and every job we possibly can. Without healthy people, we cannot have a healthy economy. As the Chair of a provincial agency, you and the Board of Directors of the Niagara Parks Commission are responsible for setting the goals, objectives, and strategic direction of the agency within its mandate; while the agency's CEO is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the agency, including its financial, analytical, and administrative affairs as well as the leadership and management of its human resources. This includes:

1. Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management

- operating within your agency's financial allocations
- identifying and pursuing opportunities for revenue generation, innovative practices, and/or improved program sustainability
- complying with applicable direction related to supply chain centralization and Realty Interim Measures for agency office space
- leveraging and meeting benchmarked outcomes for compensation strategies and directives
- working with the ministry, where appropriate, to advance the *Ontario Onwards Action Plan*

2. Transparency and Accountability

- abiding by applicable government directives and policies and ensuring transparency and accountability in reporting
- adhering to requirements of the Agencies and Appointments Directive, accounting standards and practices, and the *Public Service of Ontario Act* ethical framework, and responding to audit findings, where applicable
- identifying appropriate skills, knowledge and experience needed to effectively support the board's role in agency governance and accountability

3. Risk Management

- developing and implementing an effective process for the identification, assessment and mitigation of risks, including planning for and responding to health and other emergency situations, including but not limited to COVID-19
- developing a continuity of operations plan that identifies time critical/essential services and personnel

4. Workforce Management

- optimizing your organizational capacity to support the best possible public service delivery
- modernizing and redeploying resources to priority areas when or where they are needed

5. Data Collection

- improving how the agency uses data in decision-making, information-sharing and reporting, including by leveraging available or new data solutions to inform outcome-based reporting and improve service delivery
- supporting transparency and privacy requirements of data work and data sharing with the ministry, as appropriate

6. Digital Delivery and Customer Service

- exploring and implementing digitization or digital modernization strategies for online service delivery and continuing to meet and exceed customer service standards through transition
- adopting digital approaches, such as user research, agile development and product management

7. Diversity and Inclusion

- developing and encouraging diversity and inclusion initiatives promoting an equitable, inclusive, accessible, anti-racist and diverse workplace
- demonstrating leadership of an inclusive environment free of harassment
- adopting an inclusion engagement process to ensure all voices are heard to inform policies and decision-making

8. COVID-19 Recovery

- identifying and pursuing service delivery methods (digital or other) that have evolved since the start of COVID-19
- supporting the recovery efforts from COVID-19

I also ask that your agency's staff work with my ministry to ensure your objectives and business model are aligned with your mandate and government priorities. Please continue to focus on preserving and safely showcasing the Niagara Parks Commission's rich tourism assets, including leveraging the new, one-of-a-kind Niagara Parks Power Station attraction to draw visitors and reinvigorate Niagara Region tourism. I encourage you to work in collaboration with your partners; your Regional Tourism Organization; and other Government of Ontario agencies and ministries, where appropriate, to enhance tourism in the Niagara region and make it a world-class destination.

The government is continuing its Red Tape and Regulatory Burden Reduction initiative to reduce the cost of complying with regulations and reduce the number of regulatory

compliance requirements, including red tape, on Ontario businesses. This aligns with my request at the roundtable sessions with you and your agency's CEO earlier last year, to submit suggestions for legislative and regulatory changes that could help to reduce burdens on your agency's operations. Staff from my ministry may reach out to you to support these initiatives.

I value your role in protecting the natural and cultural heritage along the Niagara River for the enjoyment of visitors, while maintaining financial self-sufficiency. I note the significant impact of COVID-19 on the Niagara Region, and the role the Niagara Parks Commission has played, and will continue to play, in the region's recovery efforts. I would ask the Commission to work in close partnership with the ministry, and in collaboration with your fellow ministry agencies and attractions, throughout the recovery process to ensure our joint recovery efforts are maximized.

I ask that you ensure your agency continues delivering your important work in a manner consistent with government priorities. Please continue to keep my ministry informed of key activities and initiatives, as described in your Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In particular, please ensure staff from the ministry are made aware of all planned events or issues, including contentious matters, public communication strategies and publications, and stakeholder and other public consultations and discussions. I also ask that you continue to keep my ministry informed of your agency's recovery planning efforts as you implement strategies to sustain operations. As we move forward, it will be important to continue to work closely together, including taking a coordinated approach to communications, so that when it is safe to welcome the world back to our province, we are ready.

In this regard, I ask that you and your Board keep the following in mind:

- I recognize that the Niagara Parks Commission is continued by the *Niagara Parks Act*, and its Commissioners have considerable powers to develop, control, and manage Parks for which it is responsible.
- The Niagara Parks Commission is not, however, autonomous of government:
 - As Minister, I am responsible for administration of the *Niagara Parks Act* which governs the Commission. The Commission and my ministry have a duty to work together in a mutually respectful manner.
 - The Lieutenant Governor in Council appoints the Commissioners, and designates the Chair and Vice-Chair.
 - The Commission's regulatory powers are subject to approval by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.
- Your mandate is subject to the above-mentioned Agencies and Appointments Directive, which makes repeated reference to accountability: The accountability of an agency board (through its chair) to a minister; the accountability of the agency itself to the government through its minister; a minister's accountability for each provincial agency which cannot be delegated; the requirement for an MOU which reflects the accountability framework; and the minister's accountability to Cabinet and the Legislature, representing the public. Transparency is key, to the public,

and between myself and yourself on behalf of the Board.

- The MOU, signed in 2020, whose purpose includes establishing the accountability relationships between myself as Minister and yourself on behalf of the Niagara Parks Commission. These include:
 - The Board of Directors acknowledges that it is accountable, through the Minister, to the Legislative Assembly in exercising its mandate.
 - Accountability is a fundamental principle to be observed in the management, administration and operations of the Niagara Parks Commission.
 - The Board of Directors acknowledges that it is responsible to me, through you, for governance and oversight of the Commission.
 - Niagara Parks Commission and my ministry have a duty to work together in a mutually respectful manner. We agree to avoid duplication of services wherever possible.
- In addition to accountabilities, the MOU also addresses responsibilities, including:
 - My responsibility to report and respond to the Legislature on the affairs of the Niagara Parks Commission.
 - When appropriate or necessary, my responsibility to take action or direct that the Commission take corrective action with respect to its administration or operations.
 - My responsibility to keep you informed of the Government's priorities and broad policy directions for the Niagara Parks Commission.
 - Through this letter, my responsibility to outline the high-level expectations, key commitments and performance priorities for the Commission.
 - My responsibility to recommend to central agencies any provincial funding to be allocated to the Niagara Parks Commission.
 - Your responsibility to seek strategic policy direction from me for the Commission.
 - Your responsibility to ensure timely communications with me regarding any issues or events that may concern or can reasonably be expected to concern me.
- The MOU also confirms that both you and I recognize that the timely exchange of information on the operations and administration of the Niagara Parks Commission is essential for me to meet my responsibilities for reporting and responding to the Legislative Assembly on the affairs of the Commission.
- The foregoing are just some examples of MOU accountabilities and

responsibilities. I recommend that your CEO and every Commissioner review the MOU in its entirety on a regular basis.

As the world emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and global travel restrictions continue to ease, Ontario needs to ensure it is ready to compete within Canada and worldwide by driving economic development through strong recovery of the heritage, sport, tourism and culture sectors. Working together, our efforts have the potential to, once again, drive billions of dollars in economic activity and create thousands of jobs. Our work supports that incredible double bottom line – strong economic growth and a resilient cultural fabric that reflects the diversity and strength of Ontario’s communities. As Minister responsible for this important suite of industries, I recognize there is a lot of work ahead of us to get our economy moving again and to make sure Ontario remains an economic powerhouse.

I know that with Niagara Parks Commission’s help, we will succeed.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa".

Lisa MacLeod
Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

c: David Adames, Chief Executive Officer, Niagara Parks Commission
Sarah Harrison, Deputy Minister, Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
Sarah McQuarrie, Assistant Deputy Minister, Agency Relations and Accountability
Division, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries