

# Board Meeting Minutes

**Date:** February 24, 2026

**Time:** 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**Location:** Community Centre Boardroom, Niagara-on-the-Lake

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## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Andrea Leja (Chair).

**Quorum:** Confirmed

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## 2. Attendance

**Present:**

Andrea Leja (Chair), Michael Ennamorato, Debbie Pratt,, Suzanne Herbert, Brenda Tipper, Ron Simkus, Kim Friesen

**Absent:** Teri Andrus

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## 3. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

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## 4. Approval of Previous Minutes

Members confirmed that the minutes of the previous meeting had been reviewed.

**Motion:** To approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

**Moved by:** Michael

**Seconded by:** Debi

**Result:** Carried.

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## 5. Regional Governance & Amalgamation Discussion

The committee discussed the ongoing provincial review of regional governance and potential impacts of amalgamation in Niagara.

Key concerns raised included:

- Lack of clear data demonstrating financial efficiencies from amalgamation
- Potential reduction in democratic representation through weighted voting models
- Risk that smaller municipalities such as Niagara-on-the-Lake could lose their voice in regional decision-making
- Ongoing uncertainty regarding the structure of future municipal elections should governance changes occur

Members noted that the issue continues to generate significant public concern and that the Residents Association should remain engaged while focusing on issues directly affecting the community.

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## 6. Tourism Strategy Review

The committee reviewed the **Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** and discussed its implications for residents.

Observations included:

- The strategy appears primarily focused on tourism growth and economic development
- Limited attention is given to resident quality of life
- Infrastructure pressures such as parking, seasonal visitor volumes, and worker housing were highlighted
- Approximately **5,000-7,000 tourism support workers enter the town daily**, indicating the scale of tourism-related activity affecting the community.

Members agreed that tourism remains a critical economic driver for Niagara-on-the-Lake but must be balanced with community wellbeing.

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## 7. Tourism Governance Structure

The committee reviewed the current tourism governance structure in Niagara-on-the-Lake, including the roles of:

- **Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism (DMO)** - responsible for destination marketing and funded through the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)
- **Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake** - responsible for infrastructure and policy
- **Chamber of Commerce** - representing local business interests
- **Regional organizations** including Tourism Partnership of Niagara and Niagara Region Economic Development

Members noted that roles between these organizations can appear complex and that improved clarity and communication would benefit residents.

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## 8. Resident Input in Tourism Planning

A key discussion focused on the absence of formal mechanisms for resident participation in tourism planning.

Members noted that while tourism organizations provide marketing communications, there is currently no structured process allowing residents to meaningfully contribute to tourism policy discussions.

The committee agreed that improving resident engagement would help:

- strengthen community support for tourism initiatives
- improve transparency
- ensure tourism growth aligns with quality of life considerations.

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## 9. Comparative Model - Prince Edward County

Michael highlighted **Prince Edward County** as an example of a community that has implemented structured resident engagement in tourism planning.

Key practices include:

- public consultation processes for tourism-related projects
- regular resident surveys regarding tourism impacts
- a dedicated **"Resident Voice" platform** allowing residents to provide feedback on tourism initiatives.

The committee discussed how similar mechanisms could be explored in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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## 10. Proposed Next Steps

Members agreed that a collaborative approach would be the most effective path forward.

Potential next steps include:

- requesting a brief meeting with Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism representatives
- raising the importance of structured resident input mechanisms
- exploring tools such as surveys or online feedback portals for residents
- continuing to position the Residents Association as supportive of **sustainable tourism**, rather than opposed to tourism.

The committee emphasized that constructive dialogue with tourism leadership will be important.

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## 11. Communication Strategy

Members discussed the importance of communicating complex issues clearly to residents.

Suggestions included:

- using concise summaries and visuals rather than lengthy written communications
  - simplifying messaging related to tourism policy and regional governance
  - ensuring the Residents Association continues to provide accessible information to the community.
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## 12. New Business

Members briefly discussed recent tourism-related media and research materials circulated among the committee, including external case studies highlighting environmental and tourism management practices in other jurisdictions.

These materials were shared for background reference and future discussion.

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## 13. Next Meeting

**Date:** March 24, 2026

**Time:** 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Location:** To be confirmed.

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## 14. Adjournment

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting.

**Result:** Carried.

The meeting was adjourned.