

**Inaugural Address to Niagara Regional Council**  
**By Peter Partington - Thursday, December 14, 2006**

**1/6**

Members of Regional Council, staff, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured to join my distinguished colleagues as a member of the 2006 – 2010 Regional Council for Niagara Region. I thank Judy Casselman for nominating me as Regional Chairman and Damian Goulbourne for seconding the nomination.

Most of all, I thank my wife Betsy for all the support and encouragement she has given to me over the years.

I congratulate each and every one of you – my fellow Regional Councillors – for your success in the recent municipal elections, and I thank you for placing your confidence in me by electing me to a second term as Regional Chairman.

I count on your support and on the well of energy and ideas that flowed from your campaigns as we work *together* to fulfill the great potential of this region for present and future generations.

I believe Regional Council is most effective when we work in a spirit of collaboration – a collaboration to build safer, healthier, more prosperous communities for the residents we serve.

I believe that a spirit of collaboration, determination and commitment will make this new Council one of the most effective councils Niagara has ever seen.

But only if this Council builds on the successes of previous councils, and only if we do it together.

During my first inaugural address three years ago, I spoke of my great-great-great grandparents, John and Charity Kennedy, who arrived in Niagara in the 1700s with their five children.

I spoke of the commitment that they and other early settlers made to forge a better life from the rich bounty of resources this region had to offer. And I spoke of the commitment we must all make, as Regional Councillors, to build on their dream.

As was once said – “Commitment unlocks the doors of imagination, allows vision, and gives us the ‘right stuff’ to turn our dreams into reality.”

Working hard together, alongside our local municipalities, and the provincial and federal governments in a spirit of good faith and without partisanship, we can build on the vision of a safer, healthier, more prosperous Niagara for *all* of our residents.

**Inaugural Address to Niagara Regional Council**  
**By Peter Partington - Thursday, December 14, 2006**

**2/6**

As Regional Chairman, I have made a deliberate effort to conduct the affairs of the Chairman's office in a style that is understated as well as collaborative, yet determined and effective. We know that the strength of speaking with One Voice will get us heard and get us results.

That is not to say that we are not and will not be of many minds, and that is a good thing, and that is where the work comes.

Our one-voice agenda has paid dividends for municipalities across Niagara, and continues to win the attention and respect of the provincial and federal governments.

It resonated well over the past two years at our Niagara Week initiatives, in Queen's Park and Ottawa.

Some of the successes that have already come out of those initiatives include:

- The Province finally expanding Highway 406 across Highway 20 to relieve congestion and a commitment to do the design work for expanding the highway to four lanes south to East Main Street in Welland. That is work that is long, long overdue, and **together** we're getting it done.
- A recognition, in Province's 'Places to Grow' plan, of the Region's 'Grow South' strategy through the designation of Welland as a Gateway Economic Centre, and confirmation of the Region's goal to create a Gateway Economic Zone in the Niagara Falls/Fort Erie area, and the designation of St. Catharines' as an 'Urban Growth Centre'. These were areas where Niagara was once overlooked, but **together** we won't be again.
- The Province's approval of plans to build a major new community hospital to serve St. Catharines, Thorold and Niagara-on-the-Lake, along with a regional cancer treatment centre and long-term mental health facility for Niagara. **Together**, with others, it was accomplished.

Other successes of our working together include:

- The launch, this fall, of Niagara Specialized Transit – a region-wide service for providing inter-municipal transportation to and from medical appointments for Niagara residents with disabilities. **Together** we did that.

**Inaugural Address to Niagara Regional Council**  
**By Peter Partington - Thursday, December 14, 2006**

**3/6**

- The Province's acknowledgement that the Niagara/GTA Corridor is the number-one new highway priority in Ontario. ***Together*** we did that too.

Working together, we have also opened the state-of-the-art ambulance dispatch centre for Niagara, and working with our agricultural partners helped secure a provincial commitment to explore ways to breathe new life into the Vineland Research Centre as a cutting-edge research facility for our agriculture industry.

And those are just a few of the many successes this new Regional Council can build upon.

All told, they convince me that our 'one voice' agenda, anchored around Niagara Week, is making progress on the great potential for this region.

As your Regional Chairman, I pledge to continue working with you, with our local municipalities and our senior levels of government on initiatives that build on Niagara's potential by expanding our transportation infrastructure, and through an ever-greater focus on economic development and community development.

In the area of transportation:

- We must convince our provincial partners to expand Highway 406 from two to four lanes, all the way through Welland and, ultimately, down Highway 140 to Port Colborne.
- We need to explore the option, through a Regional environmental assessment, of constructing a southern connection between this new highway 406/140 and the QEW. This will be a Niagara Region project, and a good example of 'putting our money where our mouth is' while we work with the Province on other transportation initiatives.
- We should do everything possible to help accelerate the Province's environmental assessment process for the Niagara/GTA transportation corridor so it gets built in eight years.

Also, in the area of transportation,

- We must continue lobbying for the introduction of GO Transit into Niagara by 2008 as one more way of taking pressure off a congested QEW and of providing more environmentally friendly transit options to our residents and visitors to our region.
- We should build on the success of our Niagara Specialized Transit system, and work with our local municipal transit providers across our

**Inaugural Address to Niagara Regional Council**  
**By Peter Partington - Thursday, December 14, 2006**

**4/6**

region to establish an inter-municipal transit system that can be accessed by all of our residents.

On economic development:

- We must continue working with the Province and other key parties to alleviate the unfair burden on our property taxpayers under the current tax system. As part of that effort, we need a commitment from the Province to establish Niagara as a pilot project to use the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund as a tool to reduce the tax burden in a region with a lower-than-average household income and a higher share of seniors on fixed incomes.
- We need to follow through with the Province to ensure the reconstitution of the Vineland Research Center as a leading source of research and education for an agro-food industry in Niagara that contributes an estimated \$1.8 billion to Niagara's economy.
- We must continue our smart growth and brownfield redevelopment initiatives to help our local municipalities, particularly those landlocked by the Province's Greenbelt legislation, to thrive within their existing urban boundaries. We support the goal of this legislation - to protect our valued tender fruit lands - but St. Catharines, Grimsby, Lincoln and Niagara-on-the-Lake must have the opportunity to continue to grow and prosper.
- We need to continue to aggressively implement our Economic Growth Strategy and ensure that Niagara becomes known as a "Business Community" – not just a tourism destination
- Our region needs to diversify the economy across all sectors – including manufacturing and the new "knowledge" industries. It is key that our economic strategies integrate with the objectives set out by our educational institutions, Brock University and Niagara College, in order for us to be collectively successful

On community development:

- We must continue working in partnership with Niagara Regional Housing, and other public and private parties, to build more affordable housing for the thousands of low-income residents across Niagara who, through no fault of their own, do not have a safe, secure roof over their heads.

**Inaugural Address to Niagara Regional Council**  
**By Peter Partington - Thursday, December 14, 2006**

**5/6**

- We need this Regional government to continue working in partnership with the City of Hamilton, to establish the most cost-effective and sensible system for dealing with the solid waste generated in both of our regions for decades to come.
- We must continue making every effort to promote a healthier lifestyle for our residents through physical activity, healthy eating and designing our communities in ways that are more conducive to hiking, biking and other recreational activities.

I encourage every Councillor - if you haven't yet - to join our fellow citizens in taking the Trekzone Challenge, and walk the 160-kilometer-distance of the Greater Niagara Circle Route.

- We should do everything we can to build on Niagara's history and our heritage. We have an arts community that can do so much to enrich the lives of our own residents. We must support the creation of a summer venue for the Toronto Symphony and National Arts Centre; and,
- We must move forward with the planning for the commemoration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War of 1812 and 200 years of peace with our American neighbours in a style that builds a lasting legacy for future generations.
- This Regional government, too, should join the dozens of other Canadian and U.S. municipalities across the Great Lakes basin in becoming an active member of the International Association of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Mayors – a binational organization dedicated to working with federal, provincial and state governments to promote the economic and environmental interests of communities in the basin.

As a region with shores along two of the greatest freshwater lakes in the world, and with two internationally renowned connecting channels – the Niagara River and Welland Canal – contributing so much to our heritage and our economy, it is high time we take our place at the table with this organization.

These initiatives, and so many others I do not have time to mention here today, may seem daunting. I am, however, convinced we can accomplish them if we, as a Regional Council, bring our wealth of ideas together to build on the successes of past Councils.

**Inaugural Address to Niagara Regional Council**  
**By Peter Partington - Thursday, December 14, 2006**

**6/6**

I am convinced we can accomplish them in concert with our staff at the Region, from our Chief Administrative Officer, Mike Trojan, to the Commissioners and managers of our departments and partner agencies, and the many dedicated and knowledgeable people we have working on our front lines for the 425,000 Niagara residents we deliver services to. I thank all Regional employees for their service. It is they who turn our vision as a Council into reality.

One voice – more than anything else – is a powerful tool that when it comes to realizing Niagara's potential can help us collectively as a region and help us individually in our municipalities.

Together Niagara is *more* than the sum of its parts, but at the same time it *is* the sum of its parts.

If we, as Regional Councillors, remember those two ideas, which are not mutually exclusive, then this Council will help make Niagara one of the greatest regions on the continent.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you and I look forward to working together.

Thank You.