



TOWN STATEMENT

Settlement Advances Longstanding Vision for Greater Public Waterfront Access in Niagara-on-the-Lake

For Immediate Release

September 16, 2026

Following the Closed Session Meeting on September 8, 2026, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Gorge Jet Boating Limited ("NGJBL") have entered into Minutes of Settlement resolving the outstanding dispute relating to the former licence agreement for the Melville Street Dock.

The settlement closes a longstanding matter while delivering a significant improvement in public waterfront access for the broader Niagara-on-the-Lake community. As part of the settlement, the Town will receive new docking infrastructure designed to support paddle sports and expanded public access to the waterfront, creating new recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Under the settlement, NGJBL will provide and install a new floating docking system at 1 Melville Street for paddle sports and other non-motorized watercraft. The docking system will include docks, gangways, ramps, mooring blocks, and chains. Upon installation in accordance with the settlement, the docking system will become the Town's property.

NGJBL will also be responsible, at its own expense, for the seasonal installation and removal of the docking system, adjustments to the mooring chains as water levels change, and winter storage for a period of seven years. To help minimize disruption along Melville Street and River Beach Road, the docking system is to be launched from and returned to the Queenston Dock by jet boat.

The parties have agreed that the overall value of the settlement is approximately \$330,000, including the docking infrastructure and the associated installation, removal, adjustment, and storage services. The mooring blocks are anticipated to be installed in fall 2026, with the new floating docking system expected to be fully operational for the 2027 recreational season.

For many years, the Melville Street Dock primarily supported a commercial jet boat operation. The settlement will transition the site toward greater public recreational use by providing easier access to the Niagara River for kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding and other recreational activities. No commercial use of the new docking infrastructure is contemplated as part of the settlement.



This outcome advances a longstanding planning direction for the Dock Area. The Town's 2015 Waterfront Park Land Improvements Master Plan envisioned a passive waterfront corridor serving local residents, residents from across the community and visitors, and specifically identified a kayak, paddleboard and canoe launch area.

The current Dock Area Plan Update reinforces that direction by identifying opportunities to repurpose the Melville Street Dock following the relocation of the jet boat operation, improve the waterfront interface and provide dedicated small-craft access. Public engagement undertaken through the update similarly identified enhanced dock functionality and dedicated craft-launch access among the community's priorities.

The new docking system does not predetermine the outcome of the Dock Area Master Plan. It will complement the Town's continued planning and engagement work and will not prevent Council from considering additional improvements to the Melville Street Dock and surrounding waterfront lands. Options for potential transient visitor docking will be presented to Council in early 2027 to support a fuller understanding of the opportunity, related operational considerations and potential next steps.

Background

NGJBL entered into a ten-year licence agreement with the Town in September 2012 for the non-exclusive use of the Melville Street Dock to operate jet boat tours. The licence agreement was scheduled to expire on March 31, 2023.

Following high water conditions in 2019 and pandemic-related restrictions in 2020 and 2021, a dispute arose regarding the parties' respective obligations under the licence agreement and the payment of licence fees. NGJBL maintained that these circumstances significantly restricted its ability to use the Melville Street Dock, while the Town sought payment of licence fees owing under the agreement.

The Town issued a notice of cancellation of the licence agreement in June 2022 for non-payment of licence fees. NGJBL subsequently commenced arbitration proceedings in July 2022 seeking repayment of certain licence fees and other damages. The Town delivered its response to the arbitration in May 2023.

The settlement resolves all matters in dispute arising from the former licence agreement and avoids the additional costs, time, and uncertainty associated with continuing the arbitration proceedings. Upon completion of the settlement terms, including installation of the docking system, the parties will exchange full and final releases relating to the matters in dispute, and the arbitration will be withdrawn.

The settlement concludes a longstanding dispute while providing new public docking infrastructure and related services that will support recreational access to the Niagara River. The docking system is expected to be operational for the 2027 recreational season.

Media Contact:



Quinton Ascah, Communications Coordinator
905-468-3266 | communications@notl.com