

# MEMO

TO: Myfanwy Davies, Alan Upshall, Lynn Owens-Whalen, Joan Owen Mandry, Huw Williams, Berwyn Jones  
FROM: *Ellis J.*  
Ellis Jones  
DATE: July 13, 2002  
SUBJECT: Summary of visit to Niagara Falls

On Friday July 12, I met with a number of officials in Niagara Falls regarding facilities for the 2004 North American Festival of Wales. My primary hostess was Marcie Buccarelli, Niagara Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Earlier this summer Ms. Buccarelli had alerted us that even though we had a signed contract to use the Niagara Falls Convention Center as the main facility for 2004, there was a new development. Negotiations were underway for the State of New York to turn over the Niagara Falls Convention Center to the Seneca Indian Nation which was going to convert it to a gambling casino in the Fall of 2002. (NOTE: As of this date, July 12, 2002, those negotiations are still underway. It is my understanding that New York Governor Patake needs to sign the agreement for the state for it to take effect. However, the Seneca Indian Nation governing group barely approved the agreement and there are to be elections this fall which may affect the agreement. It is currently in a "state of flux.")

In anticipation of the joint approval of the agreement and the substantial impact on convention scheduling for Niagara Falls, the Niagara Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau has been placed in charge of developing an alternate site for the Convention Center.

The new site is currently identified as Fall Street Faire building. It is located next to the Holiday Inn Select (WNGGA's Headquarters Hotel). It is a large building which has been vacant for several years but has been maintained during that time. The building will need renovation; engineers have determined that it is in "good shape" and the only renovation needed is the internal realignment of walls to provide a ballroom (17200 s.f.), exhibition room (15000 s.f.), an office/meeting space (10000 s.f.), a full service kitchen area, plus building support area. It is all on one floor.

From 9:00 AM to approximately 11:30 PM I had a meeting with Deana Halko, Director of Catering, Holiday Inn Select; and Stan Rydelek, President Niagara Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. Ms. Halko took Ms. Buccarelli and I on a tour of the Holiday Inn Select to refresh my memory on the number of meeting rooms and ballrooms available for WNGGA. (See attachment A for Holiday Inn Select layout.) Mr. Rydelek provided background information on this upcoming project including a tentative drawing of the new building (See attachment B). Construction is to begin in the fall of 2002 and is to be completed by Spring of 2003.

Mr. Rydelek and Ms. Buccarelli took me to the new building and although it was not open, showed the outside of the building and where the planned spaces would be. Mr. Rydelek indicated that the renovation will take place and would be available for a more thorough investigation during the coming 10 months. I called attention to the possibility that following the OGGGA meeting in Stratford, Ontario, on April 27, some members of the Board of Trustees might be able to have a site visit the following Monday, April 29. Mr. Rydelek indicated that if for some reason the negotiations for the Convention center do not work out, there will still be the new building available in addition to the Convention Center.

In reviewing the tentative schedule worked out with Myfanwy Davies in Ottawa on July 5-6, it is my feeling that the new building will be a better spot for the major events. The Holiday Inn Select has a dividable ballroom plus a number of meeting rooms that could be used for seminars and other smaller meetings.

The only concern that I have about the new building is the ceiling height of the ballroom--it is anticipated that it will be about 30 feet. A possible option is that if the Convention Center is not turned over to the Seneca Indians, its arena would be where the Sunday Afternoon and Evening Gymanfa sessions could be held.

A strong advantage of the new building is its location--across the walkway from the headquarters hotel. The Comfort Inn at the Pointe is about 2 blocks away from the new building (compared to 4 blocks from the Convention Center), and the Sheraton Four Points is about 4 blocks from the New building compared to about 6 blocks from the Convention Center.

A question was raised with Mr. Rydelek about the March, 2001, \$4,325 payment made by WNGGA to hold the space in the Convention Center. That payment is intact and could be refunded or applied directly to the payment that will be needed for the new building. No figures are available yet on the costs for the new building. However, it needs to be kept in mind that the new building will not have seminar rooms like the Convention Center so that the cost should be lower.

In the afternoon Ms. Buccarelli and I met with a New York State Park official concerning arrangements for a special event on Goat Island. That is where the WNGGA met in 1929 and is where a special commemorative plaque was dedicated in 1979 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The meeting at the Park Headquarters building was with Tom Maxian, Park Director ; Cynthia Harris, Park Manager ; and Lewis Payne, Park Director.

In the discussion I explained that the tentative plans for the 2004 weekend was to have an event on Goat Island. The event might include a dedication of a 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plaque, talks by VIP's, and singing of several hymns by those assembled. It was agreed that because of the Labor Day weekend "crush" of tourists that the event would have to be on Friday afternoon, not Saturday. It was explained that we would plan no other events at the same time so that there might be over 1,000 persons attending the Goat Island event.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plaque is attached very securely to a very large stone on the north end of the island. There is not enough room for a huge crowd to gather at that site. It was agreed that a better place would be toward the south end of the island in an area called Centennial Grove. It is a grassy area with a permanent band stand on one side. It is just a short distance from Parking Lot 3 on the island.

Since a loud speaking system will be needed, WNGGA would have to contract the arrangements with a Niagara Falls Company. The Park service does not provide it. Also, if seating is needed for the program on the grassy area, WNGGA would have to contract for that. The Convention and Visitors Bureau can provide assistance in establishing contact with such companies.

Since the Goat Island event would not have any other events (Seminars, Eisteddfod, meetings) competing for the time slot of 2:30 - 4:00, it is anticipated that an overwhelming majority of persons attending the Festival of Wales will want to attend. This raises the question of transporting the hundreds of persons from their hotels to Goat Island and back.

Because Goat Island is within walking distance of the hotel many persons may walk. Those wishing to drive their cars would have to pay a \$5 parking fee (per car). However, Niagara Falls now has a series of trolleys which make stops at various points around the island every 10-15 minutes. It would also be possible to secure buses to go from the mainland to the island.

Ms. Buccarelli and I took the trolley to the north end of Goat Island and with the assistance of Park Rangers located the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plaque. It is in a prominent place, once you know where it is. The stone to which the plaque is attached has room on one side for a smaller plaque measuring perhaps 10 by 14 inches which could commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It was suggested that if it is determined that a plaque should be prepared, that it be at the grandstand on a tripod to be uncovered at the appropriate moment in the ceremony. Then arrangements could be made later to have the new plaque mounted next to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plaque.

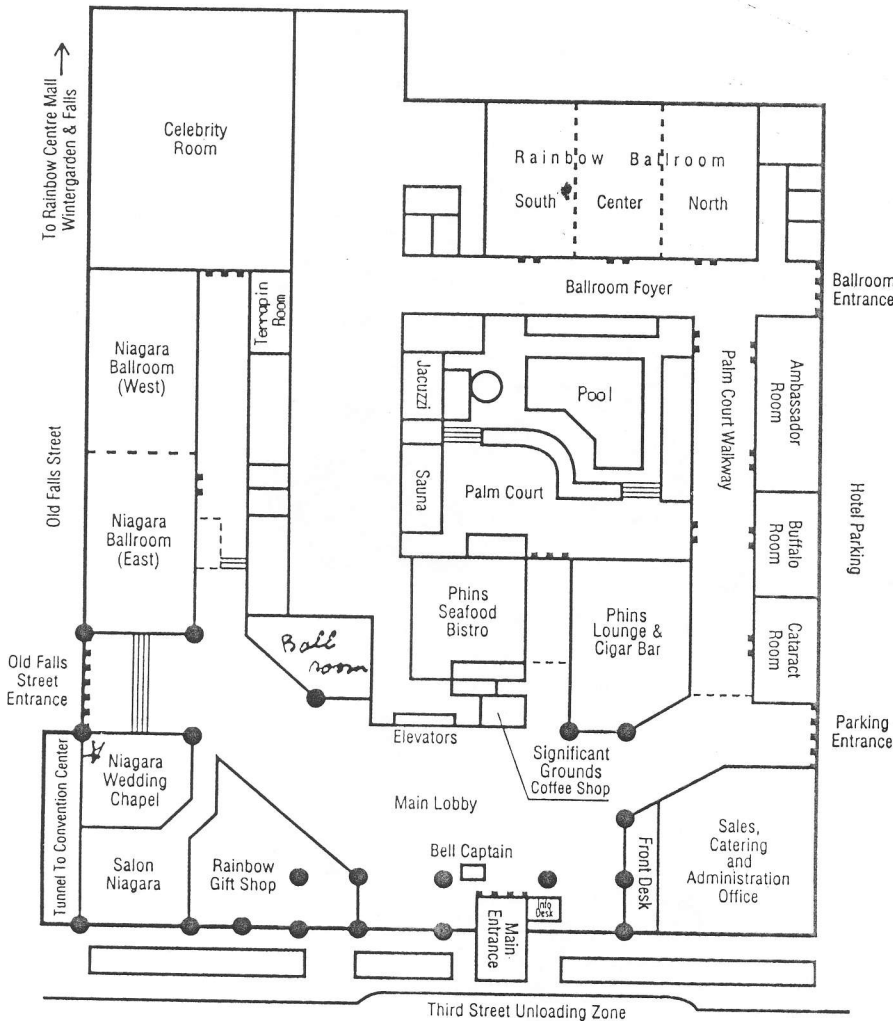
#### Conclusion

The meetings in Niagara Falls went well. I am confident that using the new building will meet the needs for the major meetings of the weekend. The Convention and Visitors Bureau stands ready to assist in any way it can. Although an incredible number of details remain to be worked out, I feel that our original plans to have the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event in Niagara Falls are on course.

Attachment A

**HOLIDAY INN SELECT, NIAGARA FALLS, NY**

Room	Dimensions	Sq. Ft.	Ceiling	Theater	Classroom	Banquet	Reception
Rainbow Ballroom	82 x 60	4,920	12"	600	270	400	750
Rainbow Ballroom North	27 x 60	1,620	12'	200	90	120	250
Rainbow Ballroom Center	27 x 60	1,620	12'	200	90	120	250
Rainbow Ballroom South	27 x 60	1,620	12'	200	90	120	250
Ambassador Room	17 x 48	816	12'	100	60	80	150
Buffalo Room	17 x 27	459	12'	40	24	40	75
Cataract Room	17 x 27	459	12'	40	24	40	75
Niagara Ballroom	46 x 100	4,600	11'	450	225	300	650
Niagara Ballroom West	46 x 50	2,300	11'	225	100	150	325
Niagara Ballroom East	46 x 50	2,300	11'	225	100	150	325
Celebrity Room	75 x 53	3,816	16'	375	180	250	400
Terrapin Room	17 x 25	425	8'	50	24	30	75
Palm Court	—	1,950	20'	—	—	125	325



**MEETINGS:**

- ◆ Over 16,000 sq. ft. of meeting space on one level
- ◆ Our facility can cater to meetings of 10 to 750 people
- ◆ Also connected to the Niagara Falls Convention & Civic Center for an extra 152,000 sq. ft. of meeting, exhibit and banquet space.

**Holiday Inn**  
**SELECT™**

Niagara Falls, NY

300 Third Street, Niagara Falls,  
New York, USA 14303

Call (716) 285-3361 ◆ Fax (716) 285-3900

\* meeting space