



PORT COLBORNE

MEDIA RELEASE

March 16, 2023

Port Colborne's Top Hat Ceremony celebrates the opening of the Welland Canal

PORT COLBORNE, ON – Next week, Port Colborne will celebrate the opening of the Welland Canal and the start of the 2023 shipping season with a traditional Top Hat Ceremony. Mayor Steele, along with representatives from federal and provincial governments and the marine industry, will welcome the captain of the first downbound vessel for a brief ceremony and light breakfast to celebrate this annual milestone.

Residents and media are invited to attend the Top Hat Ceremony. It will also be livestreamed on the [City's Facebook page](#) and uploaded to the [City's YouTube channel](#) when the event is over.

WHERE: [Lock 8 Gateway Park](#)
163 Mellanby Avenue
Port Colborne, ON

WHEN: Wednesday, March 22, 2023
Breakfast begins at 8 a.m.
Ceremony begins at 8:30 a.m.

The Port Colborne Fair Trade Committee will be providing a pancake breakfast with hot chocolate, tea and coffee.

Quick Facts:

- The first Port Colborne Top Hat Ceremony was held in the early 1970s under Mayor John Buscarino
- There are two top hats involved in the ceremony. The first hat is loaned for ceremonial purposes only from the Port Colborne Historical & Marine Museum. It's a turn-of-the-century Tress & Co beaver felt fur hat that was anonymously donated to the Museum. This particular hat has been used in the Port Colborne Top Hat Ceremony since 1999. The top hat is stored in an acid-free box at the climate-controlled Captain John W. Sharpe Heritage Resource Centre.
- The second top hat is a keepsake for the captain of the first vessel to take on their downbound journey. It is embroidered on the inside with a special message and the date.
- The present Welland Canal is the fourth Canal to be built and was officially opened August 6, 1932. The first canal was opened in 1833.
- 2023 will be the St. Lawrence Seaway's 65th navigation season of the Welland Canal.

- The Port Colborne Historical & Marine Museum has an [online exhibit](#) featuring the history of the Welland Canal including construction, commerce and industry, shipbuilders, East Street and West Street, and more.

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