



National Trails Coalition

Written Submission

The National Trails Coalition is comprised of:

Canadian Trails Federation (CTF)
Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations (CCSO)
Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council (COHV)



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The Honourable Wayne Easter
Chair, Standing Committee on Finance
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National Trails Coalition Submission

Executive Summary

We were pleased with the ongoing vigilance of the federal government towards the physical, mental and economic health of Canadians as the nation navigates through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Tourism Growth Strategy, Canadian Experiences Fund and the Destination Canada tourism marketing campaign, have all evolved strategically since their establishment to bolster our straining economy – particularly in the tourism and recreation sectors. We encourage you to build on these insightful programs to further leverage economic and tourism benefits which our National Recreational Trails Program can bring.

The National Trails Coalition – a partnership of national organizations representing volunteer-based trail building, operating and maintenance organizations in every province and territory – is pleased to present our National Recreational Trails Program – a program designed to rebuild the tourism and recreation sectors by enhancing trail beauty and quality infrastructure, to entice Canadians outdoors, and bolster our economy in doing so.

Based on what the National Trail Coalition and its partners delivered with previous iterations of federal funding, we estimate that **over 33,000 km of trail (multi-use, ATV/ORM, non-motorized and snowmobile) can be built or upgraded through this multi-year initiative**. This is on top of the improved or added on-trail features such as parking, staging areas, gates, walkways, water crossings, bridges and signage. This contributes to a developing tourism and economic product for all, in line with the federal government's objectives in the Federal Tourism Growth Strategy.

We have taken a three-year outlook and have identified key priorities within the trail sector that can be accomplished in that time period. Our National Recreational Trails Program recommends a 50/50 partnership which would see a Federal Government contribution of \$60 million matched with additional contributions of \$60 million over three years.

The National Trails Coalition is prepared to be a strong partner working with government to deliver sound public policy objectives. The umbrella organizations spearheading the National Trails Coalition are the Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations (CCSO), the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council (COHV), and the Canadian Trails Federation (CTF).

Proposal

Canada is blessed with an abundance of recreational trails that are utilized for a wide variety of activities from healthy living and physical fitness to recreational pursuits; from economic development and

increased tourism opportunities for local communities to transit from one destination to another. Trails are found in urban centers and rural areas. They range from paved pathways to machine-groomed corridors, from abandoned rail lines to simple dirt tracks. Trails help access some of the most remote and beautiful scenery this country has to offer.

The National Trails Coalition is writing to request the consideration and inclusion of recreational trails in budget and work plan, and to show how our past and current trail developments can propel these enhancements. We wish to consider with you what is possible in the future with a continued investment of federal dollars and partner dollars to stimulate individuals' and businesses' productivity, and accelerate business competitiveness, leveraging the recreational trail environment as a catalyst. The National Trails Coalition was encouraged during the last federal election when we received the following response to our request for continued support from the Liberal Campaign:

“A Liberal government will provide a new, dedicated funding envelope of \$20 billion for social infrastructure, which will prioritize investment in, among other things, recreational infrastructure such as trails. Our commitment to investing in infrastructure will ensure that groups such as the National Trails Coalition, and its municipal and provincial partners, have access to the stable and predictable funding they need to continue creating jobs and promoting our outdoors. We are proud to support investments in recreational infrastructure such as trails that keep Canadians active and healthy.”

We applaud the government's support of recreational trails with its commitment to The Great Trail, and request a similar commitment to **our shared-use approach and exponential increase in trail availability which embraces both motorized and non-motorized recreationists**. In addition to the beautiful 27,000 km which The Great Trail offers, our member trail associations – who also volunteer to make the national "Great Trail" a reality – contribute to the building, maintenance and management of the full trails systems of over 260,000 kms that feed our national dream.

The National Trails Coalition looks forward to working in partnership with the government and especially the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, who will be responsible for building on the Federal Tourism Growth Strategy, to encourage tourism as an economic driver for the regions. We know that the proposal we set forth below will support the key objectives outlined in the Federal Tourism Growth Strategy: creating and preserving good, middle-class jobs, supporting communities that rely on tourism, and attracting investment of trail users. Our proposal will give Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast the opportunity to enjoy our country's natural spaces.

The National Recreational Trails Program that we are suggesting is a program designed to ensure Canada's competitiveness in trail beauty and quality infrastructure and bolster our economic strength in doing so. We have taken a three-year outlook and have identified key priorities within the trail sector that can be accomplished in that time period. Our proposal recommends a 50/50 partnership which would see a Federal Government contribution of \$60 million matched with additional contributions of \$60 million over three years.

As mentioned, based on what the National Trails Coalition and its partners delivered with previous iterations of federal funding, we reason that **over 33,000 km of trail (multi-use, ATV/ORM, non-motorized and snowmobile) can be built /upgraded through this initiative**. This is on top of the improved or added on-trail features such as parking, staging areas, gates, walkways, water crossings, bridges and signage.

Our trail work will diversify and expand economies across Canada, will enhance trail development and management, and will create and preserve tens of thousands of employment positions in the tourism, recreation and trail management sectors. We can take Canada's trail infrastructure to the next level by bringing sector participants together in partnership to establish a new national recreational product that can be promoted in Canada and abroad. Our National Trails Coalition proposal will expand and grow Canada's four-season tourism industry, which is an economic driver for regions, and will in particular provide needed support for Canada's winter and shoulder-season tourism.

Our solid trail infrastructure will promote a positive vision of Canada in the world community – when the world safely reunites – with respect to environmentally sound trail practices and outdoor tourism, preserving Canada's natural beauty and encouraging all Canadians to enjoy what our country has to offer. This will provide an exciting new tourism product that builds on existing tourism offerings. As you know, high quality trails attract many new and diverse tourists and their spending to Canada, and continuing to develop strong recreational infrastructure through trails will involve Canadians in all provinces and territories with unique projects that instil pride in nation, region and community.

Our trail developments will promote healthy and physically active outdoor lifestyle choices and will further expand recreational opportunities where they do not currently exist or can be improved. Trail building and enhancement will re-invigorate thousands of volunteers from coast-to-coast-to-coast, which will provide recreational trails that are open to people of all ages, abilities, accessible, open year-round. We believe that trail development, use and maintenance must serve to protect the environment and natural heritage while facilitating human use and enjoyment. Our trail building proposal respects cultural and environmental sensitivities and contributes to an awareness and understanding of nature. The proposal will capitalize on the potential benefits of trails through good planning, development and maintenance, and will contribute to a knowledge base of best practices.

It is important that we remain flexible and able to respond to your needs as a government, so it is imperative that we point out that we can adjust our proposal in a variety of ways to better suit your priorities or your ability to finance a continued partnership with the National Trails Coalition.

It is also important to keep in mind the significant economic contribution that motorized and non-motorized recreational activities make to the Canadian economy as a whole. In 2015, direct and indirect expenditures through sales and usage of off-road vehicles (all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, side-by-side vehicles and snowmobiles) totaled **over 17 billion dollars**. That same year, all levels of government in Canada combined received, in taxes and levies, **over five billion dollars**. Moreover, many of the trails built and maintained by motorized trail users are also used for family recreation including hiking, jogging, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing and just enjoying nature on foot.

With mental health and physical activity being top of mind for most families as well as the health care system in Canada, we believe this is a great opportunity for all stakeholders and the government to prove that being out on the trails, whether walking, running, cross-country skiing, biking, off-road motorcycle, all-terrain vehicle or snowmobiling, is not only fun but contributes to Canadians' well-being. We were pleased to see this acknowledged in the Liberal platform during the 2019 election, and strongly agree that all Canadians should be given the opportunity to enjoy Canada's extraordinary nature, parks, and spaces as part of a healthy and active lifestyle.

When the National Trails Coalition was created, it took a long-term view of both the commitment required by the coalition partners and the degree of coordinated investment needed to improve community-based trail networks to ensure that multiple benefits are derived from them. Previous

injections of \$35 million dollars by the federal government triggered matching funds by volunteer organizations along with provincial and local governments, bringing the total impact of the trail infrastructure program to over \$93 million. The funding resulted in the construction/enhancement of 734 trail projects and building/rehabilitation of 27,042 km of trail that impacted every region the country.

PREVIOUS NATIONAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAMS			
REGION	NRTP GRANT	MATCHING FUNDS	TOTAL PROJECT SPEND
Western Canada	\$ 11.0M	\$ 16.9 M	\$ 27.9 M
Ontario	\$ 7.7M	\$ 11.0 M	\$ 18.7 M
Quebec	\$ 7.6M	\$ 14.8 M	\$ 22.4 M
Atlantic Canada	\$ 6.2M	\$ 8.4 M	\$ 14.6 M
Yukon/NWT	\$ 0.3M	\$ 0.5 M	\$ 0.8 M
Admin/"In Kind"	\$ 2.2M	\$ 6.4 M	\$ 8.6 M
TOTALS	\$ 35.0M	\$ 58.0 M	\$ 93.0 M

Increased tourism opportunities diversify and expand local, particularly rural, economies. The National Trails Coalition has demonstrated that building and enhancing a strong network of trails in Canada is an excellent way to provide safe places for people to enjoy the outdoors, promote healthy lifestyles and create jobs – both in the near term through construction and in the long term through enhanced tourism opportunities. Like you, we believe that individuals' and businesses' productivity, and business competitiveness, can all be accelerated using recreational trail environment as a catalyst.

Trail development and management in Canada is a working example of how good things happen when volunteers, landowners and supportive businesses work together with government. We would be pleased to meet with you to explain our proposal and to discuss the various priorities within it. Thank you on behalf of the thousands of volunteers who build, operate and maintain trails. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,
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