

**Written Submission: Pre-Budget Consultations  
in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget**



***Trans Canada Trail  
Sentier Transcanadien***

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government implement a long-term legacy program in relation to The Great Trail of Canada
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government provide funding in the amount of \$12.5 per annum for 20 years to promote, enhance, and expand The Great Trail of Canada
- **Recommendation 3:** That the government harness the economic and nature-based opportunities provided by The Great Trail of Canada for the benefit of all Canadians

The Great Trail of Canada is a pan-Canadian trail that unites all Canadians. It spans every province and territory, across 27,000 km of varied terrain, and connects 15,000 rural, urban, and Indigenous communities. The Great Trail is the longest network of recreational trails in the world.

Launched by Trans Canada Trail (TCT) in 1992, the year of Canada's 125th anniversary, the Trail has become a powerful thread that showcases and connects our natural wonders, the vibrancy of our communities and our people. It spans the country, uniting us across the vast landscapes and unique topographies that define our country.

The Trail is a powerful asset that drives economic development while also preserving our natural heritage. It is a connector of people and communities, a national unity endeavour that brings together Canadians from all walks of life, enhancing their quality of life, and the communities where they live, work, and play.

Given TCT's reputation as a high-quality partner, Parks Canada provided a four-year investment to support continued investment in the Trail. Indeed, TCT has a tremendous record of return on investment.

With the support of thousands of passionate donors from across the country, together with investments from local and provincial/territorial governments, we are able to engage partners and trail users to enhance federal government support by an average 3:1 margin.

This request is framed within the context of our achievements to date and our vision for the future. Our current investments have enhanced access and enabled TCT to build local capacity through knowledge sharing of environmental stewardship and other best practices. Further, in the past two years, TCT has invested in over 180 infrastructure projects including bridges and other vital commuter and recreational network links. These projects are often based on requests for collaboration from hundreds of trail partners and organizations, as well as provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, thereby assisting in the evolution of healthy, safe, and active communities.

TCT is seeking a long-term investment of \$250M to protect, enhance, and promote the Trail through 2042 – a milestone year of Canada's 175th anniversary and Trans Canada Trail's 50th. This is an opportunity for the federal government to create a sustainable legacy that will be enjoyed by Canadians and visitors, for generations to come.

We will fully leverage those investments for the benefit of all Canadians – now, as we recover from the global pandemic, and in the years to come. As a key benefit, the proposed \$250M investment will result in an economic impact of \$1.5B and create 166,500 jobs.<sup>1</sup>

In developing our case for this investment, TCT has taken an evidence-based approach. Our submission references: a TCT national survey of our partners, an omnibus survey on trail use by Leger, a recent study by the Conference Board of Canada (*Trekking Treasured Trails: An Issue Briefing on the Benefits and the Significance of Trails for Canada*) and the Waldron Report (an independent report on the

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada Input/Output Multiplier. Of note, this data captures the construction impact, and does not include the impact on economic outputs that are generated in the use of the Trail.

economic implications of protecting nature).

### **Enhancing Canada's Economy and Environment**

The Conference Board of Canada study asserts that the “Economic benefits associated with trails are manifold. The construction and maintenance of trails increases income and employment both within the region where the trail is built and across the country through indirect and induced impacts. Once operational, trails lead to economic impacts through user spending. They also support local businesses and increase property values around the trail.”

As the Canadian government considers stimulus initiatives focused on job creation and putting Canadians back to work, the Trail represents an opportunity to do just that, while also enhancing green spaces, protecting biodiversity and restoring the ecosystems that underpin our economy – ecosystems that are strengthened by the kind of sustainable infrastructure investments the Trail represents.

This study also notes that “An interconnected system of natural, enhanced and built assets such as trails and parks create a comprehensive network of infrastructure that both support the ecology and biodiversity while at the same time enhance urban and rural growth.

Trails provide many of the benefits of grey infrastructure such as transportation corridors and outdoor facilities, while having additional advantages of storm water retention, flood control, carbon reduction, reduction of air and water pollution, and preservation of natural habitats.”

### **The Great Trail: A Tourism Asset for Canada**

According to the Waldron Report, “Nature tourism is a major contributor to global GDP, estimated to contribute between \$344 and \$600 billion per year.”

With its natural wonders, picturesque vistas, UNESCO World Heritage sites, national and urban parks, and “global addresses”, such as Niagara Falls and Banff National Park, the Trail is poised to be a tremendous tourism asset both domestically and internationally, broadening economic opportunities.

With COVID currently limiting travel possibilities, Canadians are now exploring their own country. According to TCT's Leger survey (June 2020), 78% of Canadians viewed the Trail as a “one-day” tourism destination. This will create opportunities that benefit local business and attractions that are on or near the Trail.

### **Enhancing Health and Well-being**

Trails are emerging not just as an important mechanism for economic recovery, but also as a mechanism to support Canadians' health, well-being, and quality of life.

The Leger poll found that trail use is widespread, with 75% of Canadians regularly accessing trails. The Conference Board study points to the existing mental and physical health benefits associated with trail use, including the associated costs/benefits, and points to the potential for greater benefits through enhancing and expanding trail infrastructure.

A literature review by the World Health Organization found that access to urban green spaces has a positive effect on health outcomes, including reducing obesity, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged populations.

The current and ongoing potential of trail as a positive contributor to health and well-being, particularly given the social isolation that the pandemic has caused, is clear. Enhanced investments in The Great Trail will serve to magnify this contribution. The Conference Board report notes, there are also potential cost savings associated with these investments: Given that the proportion of Canadians with chronic conditions have been increasing over the years and the health care costs associated with these conditions is estimated to be \$190 billion per year, this is an important area to explore further.<sup>2</sup>

### **Enhancing Safe, Active Transport Routes**

More and more Canadians are considering shifts away from personal vehicles and/or mass transit for either public health, environmental, and/or financial reasons. Countries around the world, including Canada, have shifted focus to transportation corridors that facilitate physical distancing, enhance public health and well-being, provide low-cost alternatives, and facilitate connections to transit.

Dedicated active transportation programs provide a safer user experience, facilitate commerce, and contribute to the reduction of GHGs, 40% of which come from the transportation sector.

Given the logistical, organizational, and physical reach of the Trail, TCT is uniquely positioned to accelerate Active Transportation initiatives, with an inventory of shovel-ready projects that will contribute to these over-arching objectives.

### **Enhancing Access, Accessibility, and Diversity**

Enhanced access to nature has the potential to unlock meaningful socio-economic benefits. TCT celebrates its openness and is welcoming to all, regardless of background. Protecting this openness requires ongoing enhancements to the Trail to make it inclusive in every respect – community, heritage, culture, gender-based and accessibility.

As the steward of The Great Trail, TCT continues to enhance and develop partnerships that showcase the history and diversity of our country, using the Trail as a canvas to tell its story. This includes the physical trail, tourism opportunities, and through interpretive panels and signage programs. Trails provide touchable references to essential chapters in our country's history. (e.g., on the Chatham-Kent Trail which travels along the Underground Railroad in southern Ontario).

In addition, project requests along the Trail are viewed with an Indigenous lens. Many projects have been developed with local Indigenous groups, either in direct partnership or enhanced collaboration. TCT's Indigenous Advisory Committee brings specific knowledge and expertise to guide and advise staff on programs and project management related to Indigenous culture. The Committee acts as liaisons, where possible, to ensure successful partnerships with Indigenous communities across Canada.

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<sup>2</sup> Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada, "2018 Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance."

### **Building Capacity and Sustaining the Trail: The Next Generation**

Trails are inherently a living classroom. Teachers use trails to teach conservation, ecology, biodiversity, and history, providing students of all ages the opportunity to study the impacts of climate change.

The Trail provides citizen scientists the opportunity to explore various ecosystems, thus enhancing our understanding of how climate change uniquely impacts the land, water and species of wildlife that call The Great Trail home – and technological advances can assist in the gathering and sharing of this information.

Building upon the success of the physical Trail, TCT will continue to harness technology, as envisioned via TCT's Digital Trail program, as a way to reduce barriers to experiencing the Trail. As well, it will expand opportunities for life-long learners and school groups by bringing the Trail and its inhabitants directly into living rooms and classrooms. An interactive experience, through the installation of webcams along the Trail, will provide real-time video of nature, for both entertainment and research. Such platforms will facilitate additional education and experiential learning, while celebrating the ecological diversity of Canada.

However, ensuring the sustainability of the Trail involves the investment of resources, both financial and human. Our trail partners provided important data on both of these in the recent TCT survey. As is the case for many organizations, a glaring challenge is within the volunteer community. Of Trail volunteers, only 20% are under 45. This demonstrates the need to create the next generation of sustainably aware Canadians, to transfer knowledge and skills, and to invest in the Trail's future.

TCT would work to establish the *Trail Builders of Tomorrow* program, in order to provide employment opportunities on trails and trail projects, to build awareness of sustainability and conservation, and to provide much-needed assistance to trail organizations that, given their aging volunteers, would welcome this kind of support.

### **Budget 2020: Funding Request**

As we have moved beyond the primary connection of The Great Trail, it is critical to remember that connection does not mean completion. The results of our existing collaboration have been beneficial to Canada, to the preservation of biodiversity, to expanding/enhancing trail networks, and for user experiences. We are a respected delivery agent, as well as a nationwide leader in technical capacity building. We have stewarded our funds, leveraging these resources at a 3:1 rate with other donors and partners, and investing them wisely with numerous benefits that enhance communities in every province and territory.

We are requesting that the Government of Canada invest in a long-term legacy program of \$12.5 million per annum over 20 years so that we can continue to promote, enhance, protect – and grow – The Great Trail of Canada. This legacy program will enhance the strategic collaboration between Trans Canada Trail and the federal government, for the benefit of our trail partners and, indeed, all Canadians.

Our budget request is adaptable; however, less funding limits our ability to engage in expanded nature conservancy, mitigate the impacts of climate change, fund capital improvement projects, provide enhanced educational and cultural experiences, and promote the tourism sector on the Trail.