

## **Report of the Meeting of Stakeholders to Discuss Implementation Of the Ontario Trails Strategy, hosted by Ontario Trails Council**

Toronto, Ontario, December 14, 2005.

Present: Bev McCarthy\*, OTC President,  
Patrick Connor\*, OTC  
Tim West\*, Chair, OTC Government Relations Committee  
Israel Chackowicz\*, Cycle Ontario Alliance  
Ron Wu-Winter, Ontario Forestry Association  
Terri LeRoux, Hike Ontario  
Tim Wood, Hike Ontario,  
Terry Kirk, Hike Ontario  
Blair Richardson, Hike Ontario (recorder)  
Trish Manning, Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership, FedNor and NDM  
Jack DeWit\*, Ontario Equestrian Federation  
Dr. John Marsh, Trent University  
Tony Jennings, Ontario Professional Foresters Association  
Allen Taylor, Association of Municipalities of Ontario  
Maureen Sinclair, City of Brantford Parks and Rec. Department, representing  
Ontario Parks Association.  
Pat Longmuir, Active Living Alliance  
Dan Andrews\*, Trans-Canada Trail (Ontario)  
Ron Purchase\*, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs  
Marlaine Koehler, Waterfront Regeneration Trust  
Paula Herpstra, Heritage Ontario  
Eugene Todd, Port Hope Parks and Rec. Department, representing Parks and  
Recreation Ontario  
Wayne Daub, Ontario Federation of ATV Clubs  
John Broderick\*, Ontario Federation of ATV Clubs  
Carol Oitment, Ministry of Health Promotion

After a welcome by Bev and introductions around the table, Tim gave a history of the development of the Ontario Trails Strategy, with attention to the role played by OTC. Since the announcement of the Strategy in October by Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion, it appears to OTC, and too members of its Board and Executive that activity related to implementation of the strategy has come to a halt. OTC was told to wait for further developments regarding implementation of the Strategy, and this has caused frustration. The ensuing discussion raised comments and concerns about the merits of the OTC having a special status on the Coordinating Committee, since Tim had framed the discussions as looking at next steps and the desire of the OTC to be the coordinating group for the Trails Strategy.

With a power point presentation, Patrick made the case for action by OTC, given apparent Ministry of Health Promotion inaction. His hand-out was entitled "Ontario Trails Strategy: A Stakeholder Discussion on Processes to Achieve the Vision, Objectives

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and Core Principles”. Given that there would be some role for the OTC, the OTC Government Relations Committee called this meeting of trail stakeholders, 90% who are members of the OTC to aid in defining this role. He suggested drafting terms of reference for the Coordinating Committee, proposing Committee membership, and addressing an implementation plan through a series of workgroup meetings following a declared process of engagement and function.

(The Ontario Trails Strategy document includes a strategy to “form an Ontario trails coordinating committee, representing public, not for profit, aboriginal and private sector trail stakeholders to increase collaboration.”) There was further discussion on what was happening within Government, what the role of OTC should be how other stakeholders get involved, if they are not OTC members, and stakeholders continuing direct advocacy with government.

At 1:30 pm, 2 of 4 anticipated government representatives joined the meeting. Invited and able to attend were Carol Oitment, Policy Advisor, Recreation, in the Sport and Recreation Branch of the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP), as well as Trish Manning, representing a variety of organizations, Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, FedNor and Northern Development and Mines.

Carol Oitment gave an update on the Ontario Trails Strategy. MHP is moving ahead on the mapping piece, which will be handed off as planned to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Mapping priorities have not yet been decided. Regarding the Coordinating Committee, terms of reference have been developed and reviewed by the inter-ministerial Directors’ Working Group. The next step is to present the terms of reference to the Minister, however it is not known when this will occur, given other priorities and given that this is a Ministry “under construction”.

Composition as proposed includes ten Government representatives and ten stakeholders, e.g. OTC, landowners, tourism. MHP still has to determine which organizations will be designated as sector representatives, and Carol indicated that input to MHP was welcomed in this regard. She did say OTC membership “was a given.” Carol has a work plan for legislative review, and she will be the coordinator. There will be a work group struck, and stakeholders will be consulted. The outcome, recommended changes to legislation, will be ready this summer. Another work group will address off road vehicle use. There is no one available to work on the web site, so this project is delayed. \$330,000 has been approved in the current fiscal year for MHP projects that align with the Trails Strategy, and a decision has been made internally on how these funds will be allocated.

In discussion, Carol saw the Coordinating Committee as high level, meeting three to four times per year, with two main purposes: to hold the Ministry accountable for achieving goals stated in the Trails Strategy and to “red-flag” issues needing Ministry attention. For specific issues, work groups would be struck. Because of the urgency to get projects underway, there is not enough time to flow funds through the OTC, although the door is open if the OTC wants to pursue this further.

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At this point some decisions were made in order to facilitate the development of next steps in relation to easing into implementation and the development of implementation processes, all of which may need confirmation by the OTC Executive or its Board.

### **NEXT STEPS**

First, there is acknowledgement that OTC should take the leadership role on the Coordinating Committee on behalf of members. This leadership role involves consultation with other stakeholders, (including OTC non-members) recognizing that stakeholders do have other avenues to pursue their objectives besides the Coordinating Committee.

Second, that OTC should advise MHP further on the composition and membership on the Coordinating Committee.

Third, that OTC needs to define a mechanism or process whereby OTC members can discuss issues that will be on the agenda for the Coordinating Committee, so that the OTC representative (or representatives) on the Coordinating Committee can fairly and accurately present the views of the membership when that agenda item is discussed.

Forth - a feedback loop is needed, so OTC members can be informed afterwards about Coordinating Committee deliberations, and the reasons underlying any recommendations they may make to the MHP.

Fifth – this may be more internal to the OTC Government Relations/Trails Strategy Implementation Committee, but a parallel OTC implementation plan of the Ontario Trails Strategy native to OTC needs to be developed, such that at least as a series of talking points for the OTC in relation to the forthcoming plans and processes the government develops, or at best an alternative implementation plan exists that meets the needs of the trails community, not just the Ontario Trails Strategy.

The OTC appreciates the effort of all who attended, and in its own report back to its membership appreciates the candor, honesty and consultative nature of the input from all participants.

We look forward to hosting similar meetings in the future as the process develops or the need arises.