

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Conference Board of Canada: New Report Outlines Economic, Health, Conservation Benefits of Trails

**Ottawa, September 21, 2020** – Trails offer multiple economic, health and conservation benefits to Canada, as the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, a [new report](#) from The Conference Board of Canada shows.

The report, commissioned by Trans Canada Trail - [Trekking Canada's Trails: The Benefits and Significance of Canada's Trail System](#), highlights how using trails can positively impact the physical and mental health of Canadians, as well as provide active transportation corridors, living classroom experiences, and outdoor facilities that boost Canada's economy.

The report finds that "Trails are a powerful asset that drives economic development while also preserving our natural heritage. 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."

"The evidence is clear that trails have many benefits for individuals and the economy," says **Swapna Nair, Senior Economist at The Conference Board of Canada**. "The health benefits include improved physical and mental health outcomes due to increased activity levels. Economic benefits come from user expenditures on the trail system that benefit local communities and businesses."

"This research outlining the benefit of trails to Canada is a timely and thoughtful addition to the current discussions as to how our local and national economies can 'build back better'. Further, as public health officials and policy makers grapple with how best to manage the impacts of the pandemic, the kind of access to nature that trails provide has emerged as a powerful tool for Canadians increasingly seeking outdoor opportunities – with all of the positive benefits that nature and trails clearly represent," says **Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO of Trans Canada Trail**.

"This study follows previous research that looked at trail use by Canadians, and together they make the case for the importance and value of continued investment in trail. We are particularly pleased that this research highlights the benefits to local economies, and the opportunity for enhanced economic development and job creation through increased tourism promotion," McMahon added.

McMahon also cited a national poll by Leger (commissioned by Trans Canada Trail) in June 2020 which found that trails are a central part of the lives of 75% of Canadians, with 55% using trails at least monthly, and nearly a third (31%) weekly. "We know that trail use has been steadily on the rise in Canada and around the world. We welcome this research that quantifies the benefits of trail, as it underscores the important role that trails – like The Great Trail of Canada – are playing, and can continue to play, in the revitalization of our local communities, while providing a space where Canadians can maintain physical distance. Canadians are flocking to the outdoors and this research highlights that trails are a vital part of that experience and opportunity," McMahon noted.

## Report Highlights:

- Trails provide numerous economic benefits. Trail construction and maintenance increases income and employment in the region where the trail is built and across the country through indirect and induced impacts. Trails attract tourists and local visitors, whose spending in turn leads to other economic impacts. Trails also support local businesses and increase property values near the trail.
- Trails as green infrastructure systems 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, pollution reduction and preservation of natural ecosystems.
- By providing safe spaces for users to enjoy physical activity and recreation, trails help to improve not only physical but also mental health. The fact that nature and physical activity have been found to improve mental health has important implications for today's high levels of pandemic-driven mental stress.
- Increased physical activity among Canadians can lead to a reduction in many chronic conditions. In Canada, 44% of adults over the age of 20 have at least one chronic disease. Trails, therefore, can play a significant role in improving the health of Canadians and reducing medical costs.
- Canada's wide network of trails can help revitalize local economies by providing outdoor tourism, recreation and transportation space that can be used while respecting new physical distancing requirements.

Interviews are available on request.

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## About the Conference Board of Canada

The Conference Board of Canada is the country's leading independent research organization. Their mission is to empower and inspire leaders to build a stronger future for all Canadians through trusted research and unparalleled connections. Follow The Conference Board of Canada on Twitter @ConfBoardofCda

## About The Great Trail of Canada / Trans Canada Trail

Touching every province and territory, stretching for more than 27,000 kilometres and profiling Canada's diverse landscapes and cultures, The Great Trail of Canada is the world's longest network of recreational trails. The Great Trail links over 15,000 rural, urban and Indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast. 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. Follow The Great Trail on Twitter @TheGreatTrail