

December 4, 2013

Ms. Ana Tinta
Senior Policy Analyst
Ministry of Tourism and Recreation
Sport, Recreation & Community Programs Division
Policy Branch
777 Bay Street, Floor 23
Toronto ON M7A1S5

Dear Ms. Tinta:

On behalf of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), please find below comments on *Strengthening Ontario's Trails Strategy*. We appreciate this opportunity to provide our input and want to recognize the time and effort by the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation to review the Ontario Trails Strategy and to engage stakeholders and organizations from across the province.

OPPI is the recognized voice of the Province's planning profession. Our more than 4,000 members work in government, private practice, universities, and not-for-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, community design, environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development. Members meet quality practice requirements and are accountable to OPPI and the public to practice ethically and to abide by a Professional Code of Practice. Only Full Members are authorized by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994, to use the title "Registered Professional Planner" (or "RPP"). www.ontarioplanners.ca

Ontario's planning profession plays an integral role in creating and fostering healthy communities. OPPI's *Healthy Communities, Sustainable Communities Initiative* is the leading public policy initiative for our Institute. OPPI prepares Calls to Action, policy papers, and online learning tools to raise awareness and to highlight the key issues and challenges associated with planning sustainable communities. We have focused, over the last year, on active transportation as key part of our work in this area. Further information can be found at: <http://ontarioplanners.ca/Advocacy/Healthy-Communities-bull-Sustainable-Communities>

Active transportation, especially walking and cycling, is fundamental to healthier and more sustainable communities and trails can provide communities with these opportunities. There is a direct link between public health, infrastructure and health promotion that complements provincial policy directives associated with the work that we carry out as planners, particularly in the area of transportation planning. In keeping with this, we support a trails strategy that is based upon good policy, planning principles, and data that will serve present and future generations.

We would like to provide the following additional comments:

- The challenges identified note “trail organizations increasingly recognize that they must work together to use their resources more efficiently, make the most of their investment in trails...” while at the same time “the sustainability of trails is uncertain due to rising costs (e.g. infrastructure, maintenance and insurance)...” A detailed approach for timelines and funding for trails is absent in these statements and must be included in this strategy. Streamlining processes from planning to approvals would also assist in the acceleration of trail building.
- It is unclear where the jurisdiction for trails exactly lies. It would be helpful for the reader to understand how trails are planned and implemented. The Waterfront Trail, for example, is managed and maintained under the jurisdictions within where the route spans, however, it is coordinated by the Waterfront Regeneration Trust.
- In terms of the topic of access to land, the role and responsibilities of public and private ownership need to be clearly laid out when trails are designated. As well, trail users need to be informed of their responsibilities. Examples can be found in the United Kingdom’s Country Code and Countryside Code and The Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
- A review of public policy associated with trails should be made a priority at the provincial level. The feedback collected for the Ontario’s Cycling Strategy consultation is an indicator of the interest generated in trails.
- The Ontario Trails Strategy complements the recently released Ontario’s Cycling Strategy which includes trails as designated cycling routes across Ontario.

- Provincial ministries, including the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Transportation can play a greater role in addressing a number of common issues through policy and legislation, sustainable funding and providing guidance as required to support the vision, goals and values.
- From a transportation perspective, recreational trails, as part of a province-wide network, could parallel as a utilitarian cycling route that connects communities, particularly in Northern Ontario where connectivity is limited and distances are greater.
- The Ontario Trails Strategy requires a list of specific deliverables. The goals refer to reviewing, developing and coordinating plans and strategies, however, there is a need to clearly identify desired outcomes. An example of this need is specific legislation for motorized and non-motorized trail usage and increased fines for unauthorized trespassing through an encompassing Trails Act.
- OPPI supports the goal for “Ready access to trails near Ontario’s homes, schools and places of work” and the role that active transportation plays in our communities. This value of active transportation has been highlighted as part of OPPI’s work.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments. To further discuss our submission or to schedule a meeting, please contact me at (416)668-8469 or by email at l.ryan@ontarioplanners.ca

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ryan', followed by a horizontal line.

Loretta Ryan, MCIP, RPP, CAE
Director, Public Affairs
Ontario Professional Planners Institute