

Advancing Pathways to Discovery, Wellness and Community Connections

A Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia

DRAFT

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Welcome Messages

**Minister of Health & Wellness / Minister of Natural Resources
President of Nova Scotia Trails Federation**

Note: these messages will be added as the Strategy nears completion.

Introduction

Trails Contribute in Significant Ways to the Quality of Life in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's rich and varied landscape is criss-crossed by thousands of kilometres of trails. Trails play a vital role in our personal well-being. They support active healthy lifestyles, resulting in a population that is physically, mentally and spiritually healthier.

Trails represent one of the most accessible forms of recreation facilities and have broad appeal with Nova Scotians of all ages, backgrounds and with varying abilities. With very low barriers to participation, trails offer an excellent opportunity for people to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.

Trails provide opportunities for families, friends and neighbours to be active together and connect with one another. They enrich the vibrancy and attractiveness of communities. Families seek to live in neighbourhoods with quality outdoor recreation spaces. Trails provide opportunities for meaningful volunteer experiences – a meaningful and collaborative experience we know creates vital and lasting relationships.

Trail experiences foster a stronger understanding of and connection with nature. Trails provide access to special places, cultural landmarks and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Trails help us preserve green spaces, educate, protect and promote wildlife and wilderness areas while providing managed public access. Trails increase property values. A home near a trail can offer a pleasing view, quieter streets, recreational opportunities and more regular connection with nature.

Trails can provide greener, healthier and more enjoyable transportation alternatives and help connect communities.

Trails attract visitors, whether from away or closer to home, and support a range of economic activities. Many trail users buy goods, trail associated services, food and accommodations. Trails-based tourism creates jobs and puts money into local economies year round.

The Need for a Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia

In 2010, the Nova Scotia Trails Federation and the Government of Nova Scotia jointly organized the Trails for Tomorrow Today Conference and Government Summit to take stock of the tremendous progress made on trails over the last 40 years and envision what was needed for the future. While there was much to celebrate, there was a collective concern that we may not be adequately prepared to develop, manage and promote our trails going forward in a way that ensures:

- there is a sufficiently broad spectrum of high quality, safe and appealing trail opportunities;

- trails are being used regularly by more Nova Scotians;
- their potential to enhance the vibrancy, prosperity, connectivity and transportation infrastructure of communities is being fully realized;
- they strengthen knowledge, appreciation and caring for the natural world and our cultural heritage; and
- they will be sustainable over the long term.

Both the Trails for Tomorrow Today Conference and the Government Summit concluded there was a need for a shared strategy for trails in Nova Scotia that would serve as common reference point, draw together the broad range of organizations and groups that have historically worked independently, under a shared vision, an alignment of plans and policies and facilitate even richer opportunities for resource sharing, innovation and collaboration.

In response, the Nova Scotia Trails Federation and the Government of Nova Scotia formed the Trails Strategy Working Group (TSWG) to co-lead the process of developing a strategy for the advancement of trails in the province. The members of this group are listed in Appendix IV. While the TSWG initiated and guided the process, this Strategy is the result of a truly collaborative effort among trail building and user groups, provincial agencies, recreation organizations, municipal and provincial governments, not-for-profit organizations, land owners, First Nations, and hundreds of stakeholders from across the province. It was developed by and for the trails community and so is truly shared.

What Do We Mean by “Trail”

There are many different understandings of what is a trail is. We use the term when we’re referring to some form of path or route, whether it is a simple neighbourhood footpath, a winding track to a favourite hunting or fishing spot, a challenging long distance hiking opportunity or any number of other forms of travelways. Water trails illustrate how our definition of what is a trail evolves and changes with time. The way trails are valued also shapes how they are defined. While most use of trails is primarily about recreational experiences, trails are also valued for transportation, economic development, health and wellness promotion, environmental protection and strengthening a sense of community.

While there are clearly many forms of trails, this strategy focuses mainly on trails managed as recreation facilities but that may also be used for other purposes.

Purpose of the Strategy

A Shared Strategy for Trails will guide the trails community in a collective effort to develop a quality system of trails that contributes in a meaningful way to the quality of life of all Nova Scotians.

The trails community in Nova Scotia is inclusive of all those who have a stake in the development of trails in the province. For example, individuals, community groups, provincial organizations, businesses, landowners and the various levels of government are all a part of the trails community.

The Shared Strategy for Trails is intended to:

- define a shared vision for trails – one that calls the trails community to action,
- establish strategic directions and focused priorities that support the trails community and the development of an integrated system of trails in the province,
- foster connection, coordination and collaboration within the trails community, and
- further invigorate the trails community.

How the Strategy Was Developed

From the outset, the following principles have guided the approaches and steps taken to develop this Shared Strategy for Trails:

- a) Shared ownership, partnership and collaboration – the strategy will reflect the priorities of the entire trails community, be relevant to and guide the work of all the organizations in the trails community and rely on contributions from everyone in the trails community for successful implementation
- b) Alignment – elements of the strategy will align together and with other initiatives in an integrated and complementary manner
- c) Community development – empower and enable communities and groups to set direction and take the action needed to be successful in their trail work
- d) Benefits oriented – focusing on results rather than activities; optimizing the benefits for groups, communities and the province

The development of the strategy was undertaken using a multi-phase approach. A full outline of the strategy development process is outlined in Appendix II.

Phase I, referred to as the Situation Analysis, involved extensive research into approaches used, lessons learned and successful models from other jurisdictions, consultation with others who have led processes to develop provincial trails strategies, and a survey open to all members of the trails community in Nova Scotia. The purpose was to identify the trends and factors that could impact trails, the current strengths and constraints within the trails community, the challenges and opportunities anticipated, and finally, the elements needed in the strategy.

Phase II involved a series of face-to-face consultations with members of the trails community. Several, held regionally, were open to all stakeholders to maximize accessibility. Others were organized specifically for provincial recreation organizations, employees of provincial government departments with a mandate that includes trails, the paddling community and representatives of the First Nations community. The purpose of these was to begin to develop a strategy framework (vision, goals and priorities) that would be relevant to the entire trails community.

Once a general framework was identified, 80 individuals with specific expertise were invited to participate in Phase III where the initial strategy was reviewed, refined and more specific action-oriented elements added.

Phase IV, involving another round of consultations across the province, provided an opportunity for members of the trails community to review the draft strategy and recommend improvements.

Once finalized, formal endorsement of the Shared Strategy for Trails by the Nova Scotia Trails Federation Board, Provincial Government and provincial user organizations will be sought.

Over the course of a year and through a truly collaborative process, extensive consultations, visioning of a progressive future, thoughtful and strategic discussions, and a commitment to focus on a limited number of priorities where the greatest impact can be achieved, the trails community in Nova Scotia has reached consensus on the way forward, expressed in this Strategy.

The Trails Movement in Nova Scotia: Past and Present

Nova Scotia has several decades of trail development experience which provide a solid foundation on which to base the Shared Strategy for Trails and to move forward. The trails movement in this province has largely developed as a community-based approach to trail development, has a diversity of players, has resulted in a broad range of managed trails, and has responded and adapted to many changes over the years.

The Early Days

Before the 1980's, very few managed trails existed in Nova Scotia, with the exception of trails in municipal, provincial and national parks. The snowmobile community was already well organized, operating a club based network of trails supported by the efforts of many volunteers. Other trail users were making use of informal trails or paths, old woods roads, and canoe routes. Very few community-managed trails existed and there was little interest in trail development at the community level.

At the First Nova Scotia Trails Symposium, held in 1974 and hosted by the newly established Department of Recreation, information was shared about trail interests and initiatives within Nova Scotia and in other jurisdictions. This was likely the first, or one of the first, gathering of trail interests in NS.

Since the 1980's much has changed in the trails movement in Nova Scotia. Although it may not have been fully realized at the time, the Trails for Tomorrow Conference held in Nova Scotia in 1989, represented the beginning of a new era: one focused on community trail development. The Nova Scotia Trails Federation (NS Trails) was born in 1989 out of the conference from a recommendation that a provincial umbrella group be created to represent the collective interests of trail user groups.

Through the 1990's, a number of factors influenced the trail movement and served as catalysts to trail development. These included the Trans Canada Trail vision, the availability of abandoned rail lines owned by the Province, and the designation of the first protected wilderness areas in Nova Scotia. During this period we began to see shifts in recreation trends including the growth of mountain biking and OHV recreation and interest in wilderness hiking trails. It was clear more people were becoming interested in trails, both as builders and as users. In support of the growing trails movement, leaders in the provincial government and Nova Scotia Trails Federation, its members and partners, were focusing on creating a positive climate which would allow community trail development to flourish. Some examples of initiatives during this time included:

- the creation of the trails manual [Developing Recreational Trails in Nova Scotia](#) (1998);
- the establishment of the provincial Rails to Trails Policy;

- an expansion of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation mandate, incorporating community-based trail groups into its membership;
- funding attendance at national and international trail conferences; and
- the support and encouragement of interested individuals and groups to create community-based associations with a trails mandate.

The Nova Scotia Trails Federation, the provincial umbrella group for trails has been working for over 25 years to build capacity in communities throughout Nova Scotia and to support the work of now thousands of volunteers. Provincial user groups have also been working with their members to strengthen the trails movement and in many cases have become trail builders, either building or contributing to the construction, maintenance and management of thousands of kilometres of trails in the province. The trails movement has benefited greatly from the vast network of individuals and groups with substantial knowledge and capacity for trail development, deep roots in communities and considerable trail resources. While there is much to be proud of, there is a strong belief that more can be done.

Today

As a result of the hard work and dedication of many in the trails movement, the trail landscape in the province looks much different today than a few decades ago. Over the years, relationships have developed, experience has been gained, and information has been shared. The breadth of players involved in the trails community and diversity of trails in the province is a testament to many committed individuals and organizations.

In 2016, Nova Scotia has thousands of kilometres of recreational trail opportunities throughout the province. Some of these trails are managed by federal, provincial or municipal governments, but the vast majority of community trails are managed by volunteers within the community the trail serves. Although formal research is lacking, one only needs to use the trails across the province to understand the growth and popularity of trails in Nova Scotia.

Presently the trails community in Nova Scotia includes:

- over 200 organizations that build, maintain and manage trails, most of which are members of Nova Scotia Trails Federation;
- thousands of volunteers, collectively involved in every aspect of trail development;
- 9 provincial trail user groups and their members;
- many of the province's 51 municipalities that are actively engaged in trail development, directly or indirectly through support to community trail groups and trail user groups;
- First Nations communities
- Interdepartmental Committee on Trails (ICT) which represents seven provincial government departments;
- federal government (ACOA & Parks Canada)
- national and international organizations (e.g. Trans Canada Trail, National Trails Coalition, International Appalachian Trail) which have partnered with local trails organizations;
- the private sector, an increasingly involved partner in the trails community.

Nova Scotia offers a broad spectrum of trail experiences. While no formal inventory has been conducted to date, it is believed in excess of 10,000 kilometres of trail exist in the province, including the following:

- several thousand kilometers of trails and routes that are used or managed by OHV clubs and associations;
- over a thousand kilometers of former abandoned rail line managed by 44 local community organizations and several municipalities; these rail trails connect many communities in the province; many serve as active transportation routes;
- hundreds of kilometers of managed hiking trails – inland and coastal, wilderness and near urban;
- hundreds of kilometers of trail found in municipal, provincial and national parks;
- hundreds of kilometers of canoe and sea kayaking routes; many of which have been traveled for centuries
- a growing number of dedicated mountain biking trails. (organized mountain biking is a relatively young activity in NS)

We have a long history of, and are recognized nationally as leaders in, community development approaches to trail building and management.

Taking a community approach to trail development has resulted in many partnerships and creative solutions. Shared use trails have created opportunities for collaboration, are particularly attractive where resources are limited (volunteers, public land, money) and when building a number of stand-alone trail systems to serve the diverse needs of small communities is impractical. It is also true that conflicts between users have arisen.

Single use trails also have an important role to play, particularly when users are looking for a very specific experience, one only found in certain environments or through specific design. Examples would include the off-road motorcycle riding parks, mountain biking facilities and the Cape to Cape wilderness hiking trail.

As the trails movement in Nova Scotia has grown and matured, new initiatives have also been introduced, such as:

- a trail patrol program
- affordable general liability insurance - the Nova Scotia trail insurance program is considered the gold standard. It is the only one of its kind in the country and is being used as a model elsewhere.
- educational programs
- rider safety training
- risk management training
- youth engagement programs
- trail-specific funding from multiple sources for construction, maintenance, engineering and capacity building
- guided trail events

The trails movement continues to grow and change. While for some, building new trails continues to be important, for others, the focus is shifting more towards management (maintenance), attracting more users, exploring economic development opportunities and being more strategic about where and when to build new trails.

While large system continuity continues to be important, we are also seeing an increased emphasis on ensuring that local trails are connected to facilities, attractions, services, transportation networks, communities and spaces that enhance the trail experience.

Building Blocks for the Shared Strategy – Our Strengths, Challenges and the Ability of Trails to Contribute to Other Important Objectives

Current Strengths to Capitalize On

Looking ahead, the Shared Strategy for Trails will further strengthen and capitalize on:

- a) the rich diversity of landscapes and opportunities for outdoor recreation in Nova Scotia and the growing demand for access to these special places;
- b) the expansive and diverse system of trails across the province - many exceptional, many cared for by local communities;
- c) the growing recognition of the contribution of trails to the wellbeing of individuals, community and the environment;
- d) the increasingly important role of some trails and trail systems in developing effective active transportation routes and connecting communities;
- e) the expansive network of committed, talented and creative volunteers, professionals and community groups engaged in the trails community;
- f) the increasing recognition of the role that trails and other outdoor recreational activities can play in tourism growth and related economic benefits;
- g) the many examples of successful collaborations between trail developers and public and private land owners;
- h) the significant provincial government support, including the formation of Interdepartmental Committee on Trails (ICT) as a coordinating body;
- i) the growing engagement of municipal governments;
- j) the unique contribution that trails can make to support the objectives of the public and private sectors (many of which are outlined in the following section)

Challenges We Need to Address

The trails community in Nova Scotia also faces a number of challenges. Not surprising, many of these are also experienced in other jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally. The following were considered the most critical to address through the Strategy.

- a) a trails community that isn't always aligned or working collaboratively
- b) trails developed in an ad-hoc manner – not planned, constructed or managed to maximize use and benefits
- c) lack of supports for trail development and management at the community and regional levels.
- d) insufficient information and resources for trail users.
- e) lack of appropriate and sustainable funding.

How Trails Fit With Other Important Initiatives

There are a large number of initiatives, currently underway or nearing completion, that were taken into account in the development of the Shared Strategy for Trails. Many strive to achieve some of the same or similar objectives, most are complementary. Some will contribute to the realization of the Shared Strategy and some will benefit from and perhaps be shaped by the Shared Strategy.

Most notable of the initiatives are:

- the hundreds of community-based activities underway to develop, manage and promote the use of trails
- projects undertaken with support from the Off Highway Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (OHVIF)
- the Snowmobile Association of Nova Scotia Plan
- the Blue Route, Provincial Cycling Network
- the Sustainable Transportation Strategy
- the National Recreation Framework and the Shared Strategy for Recreation in Nova Scotia
- Thrive!
- the Nova Scotia Active Transportation Policy Framework
- the Natural Resources Strategy
- the Parks and Protected Areas Plan
- the Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy
- the Destination Trails program
- the One Nova Scotia Action Plan
- the Trans Canada Trail
- the Cape-to-Cape Trail
- the International Appalachian Trail

Throughout the Strategic Goals and Priorities section, specific reference will be made to the initiatives to which they relate.

A Vision for Trails in Nova Scotia

Our vision for trails in Nova Scotia is:

All Nova Scotians and visitors have access to a broad spectrum of high quality, safe and appealing trail opportunities and are using them regularly. As a result, we enjoy many health, social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

In more concrete terms, our vision can also be expressed by the five outcomes we are endeavouring to achieve:

1. trails are enhancing the vibrancy, prosperity, connectivity and transportation infrastructure of communities,
2. trails are developed, managed and resourced to be sustainable over the long term,

3. trail planning and construction supports stewardship of the environment and contributes to the knowledge, appreciation of and caring for the natural world and our cultural heritage,
4. the agencies, organizations and communities that make up the trails community are aligned in their visions, sharing knowledge and resources and working collaboratively together, and
5. provincial and municipal governments are actively engaged with and effectively supporting trail stakeholders.

Strategic Goals and Actions

Our vision and the associated outcomes will be achieved by working on 4 broad goals, each comprised of a number of key actions. These goals and actions are comprehensive and complementary. Our success will require us to pursue them in an integrated way.

It should also be pointed out that these goals and actions represent a starting point. As we begin to make progress, as we learn more and as circumstances change, so will the strategy.

Goal #1 - Strengthen Provincial Leadership, Alignment and Collaboration

Actions:

- 1.1. establish a provincial Trails Strategy Coordinating Group to:
 - establish a plan to support implementation of the Strategy
 - provide ongoing governance, oversight and measurement of progress
 - facilitate the efforts of trails stakeholders to plan and coordinate trails at the provincial and regional levels, establishing strategic priorities based on greatest needs and benefits
 - provide opportunities for trails stakeholder groups to connect; align visions, plans and activities; and share knowledge, resources and best practices

Specific Steps:

- a) the Trails Strategy Working Group, in consultation with the trails community, will establish the terms of reference, solicit nominations for the Trails Strategy Coordinating Group (ensuring effective representation), make appointments and provide an orientation
 - b) the Trails Strategy Coordinating Group will then assume responsibility for the Strategy and the Trails Strategy Working Group will be disbanded
- 1.2. expand the capabilities and capacity of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation to:
 - support trails stakeholder groups to connect; align visions, set plans and priorities; share knowledge/resources/best practices and discover opportunities for collaboration
 - provide or facilitate access to expertise, resources, support and trail information
 - provide a forum for the trails community to express its aspirations, needs and concerns and working collaboratively to ensure these are understood by policy/decision makers
 - assist with the implementation of the Strategy
 - promote and market trails and their many benefits
 - strengthen engagement and advocate for investment in trails by the public and private sectors

Specific Steps:

- a) conduct a review to identify the strengths and limitations of the Nova Scotia Trails Federation to fulfill the responsibilities outlined above and in light of the Shared Strategy for Trails
- b) ensure an effective governance structure
- c) review and revise the role, priorities and practices as needed
- d) create strategic/development/resourcing plan for the Nova Scotia Trails Federation
- e) obtain endorsement for the renewed role and plan from the trails community

1.3. strengthen Provincial Government supports to the trails community and the Trails Strategy

Specific Steps:

- a) review, revise and gain endorsement for terms of reference for the Interdepartmental Committee on Trails (ICT) that better enables it to coordinate and improve trails work within government
- b) ensure the work of ICT is informed by regular exchanges of information and consultation with the trails community
- c) improve government legislation, policies, procedures, priorities and practices to better support trails, including:
 - identifying and addressing gaps/issues in legislation, regulation and policy
 - repeal the Trails Act and develop a new one that is more relevant to the trails community
 - improve, streamline and ensure consistency in government processes
 - establish a single portal – consolidating information regarding policies, resources, funding, contacts, etc. for trails and making it available via web site
 - strengthen staff commitment, skills and processes to incorporate community development practices
 - ensure policies and funding aligns with the Shared Strategy and provincial trail priorities
 - establish a system of regional contacts/coordination for government support of trails
- d) develop a sustained funding model that:
 - commits to dedicated but diverse sources of funding for trails based on clear funding formulae
 - enhances and balances investments in the development, promotion and maintenance aspects of trails work
 - has provisions for large infrastructure projects such as bridges
 - is administered through a single portal and uses an efficient application process
- e) continue to support the insurance program
- f) explore the potential to make government expertise, engineering and inspection services and equipment available at no/low cost
- g) maintain consistent and strategic liaison with the Federal Government to raise awareness of how trails in Nova Scotia contribute to federal priorities and qualify for funding opportunities

1.4. expand Municipal Government support of trails and the Shared Strategy, including:

- partnering with the local trail development and user groups
- assessing local needs, benefits and opportunities
- incorporating trails into existing plans and policies
- instituting bylaws that enable and support trail development
- providing financial support
- providing access to land
- promoting the use of trails

Specific Steps:

- a) develop materials for municipalities that promote the benefits and facilitate the adoption of best practices with respect to support for trail development, management and programming
- b) strengthen engagement of Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) and the Association of Municipal Administrators (AMA)

1.5. clarify and ensure a shared understanding of the roles, relationships, approaches and processes of the various organizations that make up the trails community

Specific Steps:

- a) provide a tool and invite trails organizations to profile their purposes, plans, approaches, collaborations and successes
- b) compile and share the profiles on-line
- c) identify opportunities to clarify and connect what organizations do, facilitating each to offer to collaborate and share what they do well
- d) consider bi-annual conferences to facilitate learning and collaboration

Goal #2 - Improve the Planning of Trails

Actions:

2.1. identify, promote and support adoption of the most effective model(s) for trail planning

Specific Steps:

- a) assess current planning practices and identify and share effective and efficient models for trail planning
- b) The Strategy Coordinating Group will, in collaboration with trail stakeholders, establish, promote and support the adoption of “preferred” planning processes that:
 - are effective, efficient and relevant to trails organizations across the province
 - enable the creation of local, regional and provincial plans that are consistent and aligned with the Strategy
 - identify the priority of planning, construction and maintenance projects and directs resources accordingly
 - provide for long term asset planning, monitoring, and management
- c) develop resources and services that raise awareness and facilitate adoption of the preferred planning process

2.2. collect, develop and share resources that support trail planning

Specific Steps:

- a) update and distribute the Trails Manual
- b) develop a provincial directory of trails that profiles trails in a consistent and comprehensive manner – the profile will use a common framework and will include trail descriptions, access points, points of interest, amenities, complementary services, etc.
- c) establish and provide access to a pool of individuals from the volunteer, government and private sectors, related to trail planning
- d) create tools that enable communities to gain a better understanding of the needs, experiences and concerns of current trail users as well as potential new users
- e) study and share the many tangible benefits that have resulted from trails

2.3. increase access to lands and waterways for trails development

Specific Steps:

- a) collect and share information about the requirements and process to gain access to lands
- b) create tools and incentives to secure rights-of-way for trails with property owners (e.g. easements, tax credits, protection from liability/harm)
- c) develop resources to assist trail builders with land-use negotiations
- d) work with provincial and municipal governments to make strategic land acquisitions

Goal #3 - Expand Supports for Trail Developers and Managers

Actions:

3.1. diversify, enlarge and stabilize the financial base for trails

Specific Steps:

- a) stabilize and increase annual funding to enable groups to build and manage trails in a sustainable manner – the following sources to be explored:
 - more effective allocation of current funding
 - increased funding from municipal, provincial and federal levels of government
 - expanded and new revenue streams
 - user pay systems
- b) maintain the OHVIF program
- c) establish a provincial “fund development” resource to strengthen skills, approaches and tools needed to raise funds
- d) mount a campaign to strengthen engagement and investment in trails by the public and private sectors

- 3.2. expand and promote provincial resources for trail developers and managers and make them easily available

Specific Steps:

- a) establish a system for profiling/classifying/describing trails that:
 - inventories the full range of trails across the province using consistent metrics
 - gives users accurate/reliable information on which to make trail-use decisions (e.g. level of fitness required, distances/expected times, safety considerations, etc.)
 - includes trail amenities, services, points of interest
 - enables long term planning and maintenance costing
 - employs a combination of crowd-sourcing by users and contracted specialists to collect data
 - allows for ongoing modification and updating
- b) put the data collected in a useful form and make it accessible on-line:
 - link to other existing and emerging information sources
- c) establish and provide access to a pool of resources and experts from the volunteer, government and private sectors, regarding:
 - effective forms of community engagement
 - trail construction, maintenance and management
 - web-based directory of possible contacts for information/assistance for trail builders and organizations
 - potential sources for expertise and funding
 - constructive and consistent approaches to preventing and addressing conflicts
 - proven approaches to addressing a range of trails issues, safety concerns, negotiating agreements with private landowners, addressing user conflicts

- 3.3. expand and/or strengthen the human resources available in regions to meet current and evolving needs

Specific Steps:

- a) promote the benefits of involvement in trails
- b) stabilize and expand the number of volunteers and next generation of trail users, builders and managers – targeting youth, women and young retirees
- c) grow and support the development of expertise, particularly within newly formed groups through:
 - targeted recruitment, retention and recognition initiatives
 - improve access to relevant training - address financial and other barriers and explore partnerships (e.g. community college program)
 - facilitate mentoring by experienced groups
- d) support the development of governance capabilities within trails organizations
- e) increase the number and capabilities of trail leaders in the regions
- f) initiate a campaign to engage a broader range of users in the development, management and financing of trails

Goal #4 - Increase Trail Use

Actions:

4.1. compile information/resources that support trail use and make it easily accessible

Specific Steps:

- a) develop a single, authoritative and up-to-date source of trail information including:
 - trail profiles so potential users can reliably anticipate what to expect on a trail, how to access them, maps/data to aid with navigation, points of interest, guidelines regarding safe/responsible use, contact information, what amenities are available so individuals can better plan where to go for trail experiences that best match their expectations
- b) develop a range of methods to make the information available which may include:
 - a single web-based portal
 - resources at visitor information centres
 - mobile apps
- c) create a common and simple reporting mechanism to collect information on user experiences

4.2. facilitate the safe and proper use of trails thereby minimizing conflicts and enhancing experiences for all users

Specific Steps:

- a) develop signage guidelines that:
 - are consistent with guidelines laid out in the updated Trails Manual
 - helps users to navigate to suitable parking, trail heads, along trail routes and to amenities
 - promotes appropriate trail behaviours (etiquette)
 - enhances experiences (interpretive)
- b) develop and implement a campaign to promote responsible trail behaviours – expand education and trail patrol programs
- c) strengthen regulatory enforcement efforts

4.3. promote our trails

Specific Steps:

- a) partner with other organizations to develop, fund and implement a social marketing campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of trails in support of active lifestyles and as a component of transportation
- b) raise awareness among educators, recreation leaders and outdoor enthusiasts of the role that trails can play as a program space
- c) promote the use of trails for active transportation
- d) link the contribution that trails can make to the achievement of objectives of governments, organizations, agencies and businesses
- e) promote the benefits and encourage the locating of amenities and services in close proximity to trails (e.g. equipment rental and guiding businesses, interpretive resources, restaurants, accommodations, restaurants, etc.)

Suggested Roles within the Trails Community

The trails community in Nova Scotia is made up of a diverse array of agencies, organizations and groups. Each is positioned and able to contribute something unique and valuable. The success of the trails community as a whole is, in large measure, the result of each player contributing what they do best.

While the following summary of roles and contributions have not been adopted to this point, they are suggested as appropriate as we move forward in the Nova Scotia context.

Local trail groups are the backbone of the trails community in Nova Scotia. Our trails community thrives on a core of committed volunteers, members of trail groups and other not-for-profit organizations. Their role is to create wholesome trail experiences that benefit trail users directly, deliver indirect benefits (e.g. public goods) to citizens, and support volunteers to make contributions. They need to be supported by local community decision makers (e.g. councils and recreation boards) and also by sport, recreation and cultural associations. More specifically, local trail groups:

- communicate with and work to satisfy the trail interests of all community members;
- plan, construct, maintain and manage trails to ensure maximum use and benefits, safety, sustainability, preservation of environment and adherence with established standards;
- seek, negotiate and monitor agreements with landowners;
- generate resources;
- promote public awareness, appreciation and responsible use of trails.

The role of **local governments and communities** is to act as the prime agency for development, management and the sustainability of trails. They maintain a focus on need rather than demand, on outcomes rather than activities, and encourage public participation to build strong vibrant communities that support active and healthy lifestyles. More specifically, community decision makers:

- conduct planning which incorporates trails to create wholesome, friendly, inclusive communities where collective goods can be enjoyed by all;
- provide resources to develop, maintain and promote trails that contribute to health and well-being, community identity, spirit, pride and culture, sustainable environments, and access to nature.

First Nations

Communication with representatives of the First Nations community in Nova Scotia to gain perspective on their future involvements with trails and the Strategy is on-going. We are awaiting a response at the time of this draft.

The role of **provincial recreation organizations**, including provincial sport and cultural organizations is to advocate on behalf of trails, provide services to practitioners and volunteers working in the field, and support community decision makers. More specifically, such organizations:

- advocate for the most appropriate roles and services from the provincial government;
- educate members, decision makers and general public about the value of and benefits of trails;
- provide ongoing development of the knowledge and skills of practitioners, volunteers, and decision makers;

- collaborate with local governments to coordinate trail development on a regional basis resulting in a broader range and higher quality of trail experiences, greater connectivity, resource sharing and cost effectiveness within a region;
- partner with universities and colleges on curricula needs of those working in the field;
- monitor and measure important trends, current issues, emerging needs, gaps, and effectiveness of regulatory frameworks, and share that information.

Nova Scotia's trail system depends on the generosity of **private property owners**. Many trails cross private lands, with access given by property owners who are willing to share their property with trail users. Some property owners have even donated their land to trail organizations.

The role of the **local school districts** is to work with local trail groups to make use of a potential public resource (e.g. school properties), educate about the value of trail oriented activities, and engage students in recreational use of trails.

The **Nova Scotia Trails Federation** will continue to work with its members and partners to engage volunteers and build capacity for trail building, maintenance and management. The Nova Scotia Trails Federation will:

- support trails stakeholder groups to connect; align visions, set plans and priorities; share knowledge/resources/best practices and discover opportunities for collaboration
- provide or facilitate access to expertise, resources, support and trail information
- provide a forum for the trails community to express its aspirations, needs and concerns and working collaboratively to ensure these are understood by policy/decision makers
- assist with the implementation of the Strategy
- promote and market trails and their many benefits
- strengthen engagement and advocate for investment in trails by the public and private sectors

The **Government of Nova Scotia** bears significant responsibility for advancing the development and use of trails in the province. It clarifies and promotes the importance of trails in contributing to the health and well-being of Nova Scotia residents, their communities and their environments. More specifically, the Government of Nova Scotia:

- develops provincial policies, processes and supports regarding trail development and use that align with provincial priorities;
- maintains an interdepartmental committee to coordinate and align the work of various departments engaged in trails;
- in partnership with municipalities and the federal government, finances investments in trail infrastructure development and sustainability;
- in partnership with municipalities and provincial trails organizations, sets construction and maintenance standards;
- directs supports and incentives to those communities, groups, and environments where the need is greatest and ensuring equity of access to trails;
- develops and maintains high quality trails in provincial parks;
- finances provincial sport, cultural, and recreational agencies and associations that use trails;
- works in partnership with colleges and universities to coordinate a research agenda and to train practitioners.

The role of the **federal government** is to promote the importance of trails in contributing to the health and well-being of Canadians, their communities and their environments. More specifically, the Government of Canada:

- designates, protects and manages national parks and protected areas;
- supports national initiatives and strategies related to trails;
- partners in the financing of major infrastructure development and sustainability;
- liaises with First Nations and their communities.

The role of the **private sector** is increasing in scale and significance as it responds to the growing demand for leisure opportunities and respond to needs within communities. The private sector:

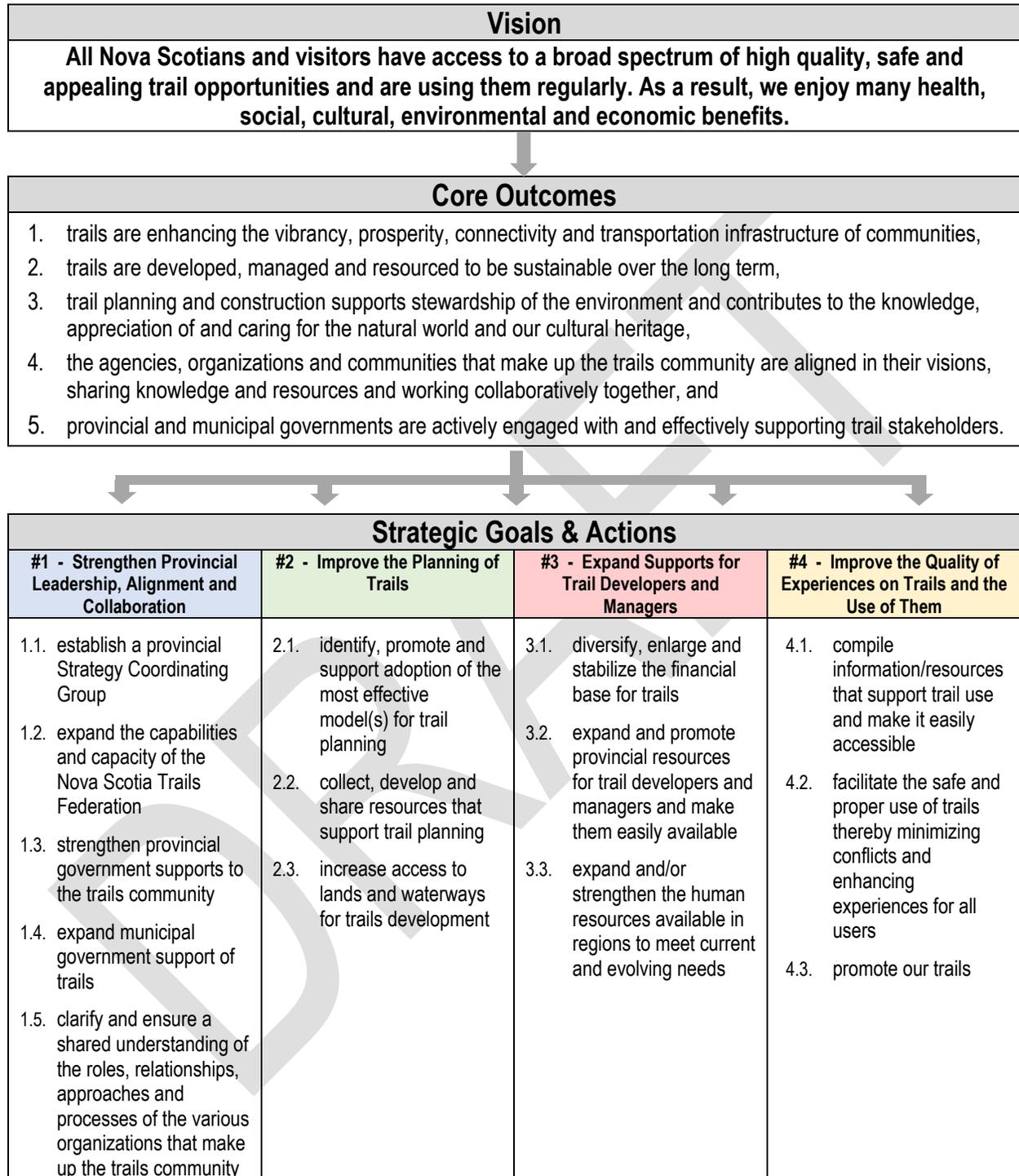
- invests in services that benefit from market opportunities created by a trail (e.g. guiding services, equipment rental, accommodations, restaurants, etc.);
- sponsors trail developments and/or events that align with their business interests;
- responds to community needs.

The role of **Universities and Colleges** is to undertake educational and research programs relevant to the public interest. Specifically, they:

- educate and prepare individuals with skills and abilities relevant to the trails community;
- conduct and disseminate the results of research so that practitioners working in the field and decision/policy makers can make more informed decisions.

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Summary of the Shared Strategy for Trails



Monitoring and Reporting on Progress

The Strategy Coordinating Group is responsible for developing a system for regular monitoring and measurement of progress on the Strategy. It will share the results and successes to keep everyone informed, motivated and moving forward together.

The results will be an important source of information for future planning and priority setting. As we move forward, we will continue to seek input and partner on the evolution of our Shared Strategy.

In Closing

Nova Scotia is truly fortunate to have an outstanding trails community made up of passionate, committed and knowledgeable volunteers and professionals, a rich history and foundation on which to build and the vision and commitment to do even more. The Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia is evidence of the ability of this community to come together, collaborate, openly discuss different points of view, develop a shared vision and reach consensus on the way forward.

This Strategy is ambitious however, with sustained leadership, coordination, and investment, it will guide the trails movement in a collective effort to successfully realize the vision of a broad spectrum of high quality, safe and appealing trail opportunities that contribute in a meaningful way to the quality of life of all Nova Scotians.

Appendix I

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Active Transportation: is any form of human-powered transportation. It is any trip made for the purposes of getting yourself, or others, to a particular destination such as to work, to school, to the store or to visit friends. As long as it is “active”, you can choose the mode: walking, cycling, wheeling, in-line skating, skateboarding, ice skating (across a lake).

Community Development: Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to set direction and effect change within their communities. It serves to build stronger and more vibrant communities at the grass roots level. This development often takes place when community members come together to take collective action and/or generate solutions to common problems.

Community Trail Groups: not-for-profit organizations that are formed to build and manage sections of trail near the community where their members live.

Designated Trails: trails that have been designated for use by a particular type of trail user.

Established Trails: taken from the NS Trails Act - trails that are located and operate on crown lands and over watercourses for recreational use and enjoyment or privately owned lands, with the prior consent of the owners or occupiers.

Managed Trails: recreational trails that are managed or operated by a government department, a registered not-for-profit trails organization or an incorporated trail user group. In order to qualify as a managed trail, there must be an agreement between the manager / operator and the landowner that establishes the terms of use of the trail.

Motorized Trails: trails that permit snowmobiles and/or ATVs and/or off-road motorcycles.

Non-Motorized Trails: trails that do not permit snowmobiles, ATVs or off-road motorcycles.

OHV: an abbreviation for an off highway vehicle. Any motorized mode of transportation built for cross-country travel on land, water, snow, ice or marsh or swamp land or on other natural terrain.

ORM: an abbreviation for an off-road motorcycle.

Recreation: the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

Shared Use Trails: trails that permit more than one type of trail user either at the same time or during different seasons.

Single Use Trails: trails that are designed for use by a single trail user group.

Trans Canada Trail: a national registered charity whose purpose is to promote the completion and use of the Trans Canada Trail, a shared use trail that will run 22,000 kilometres from coast to coast to coast.

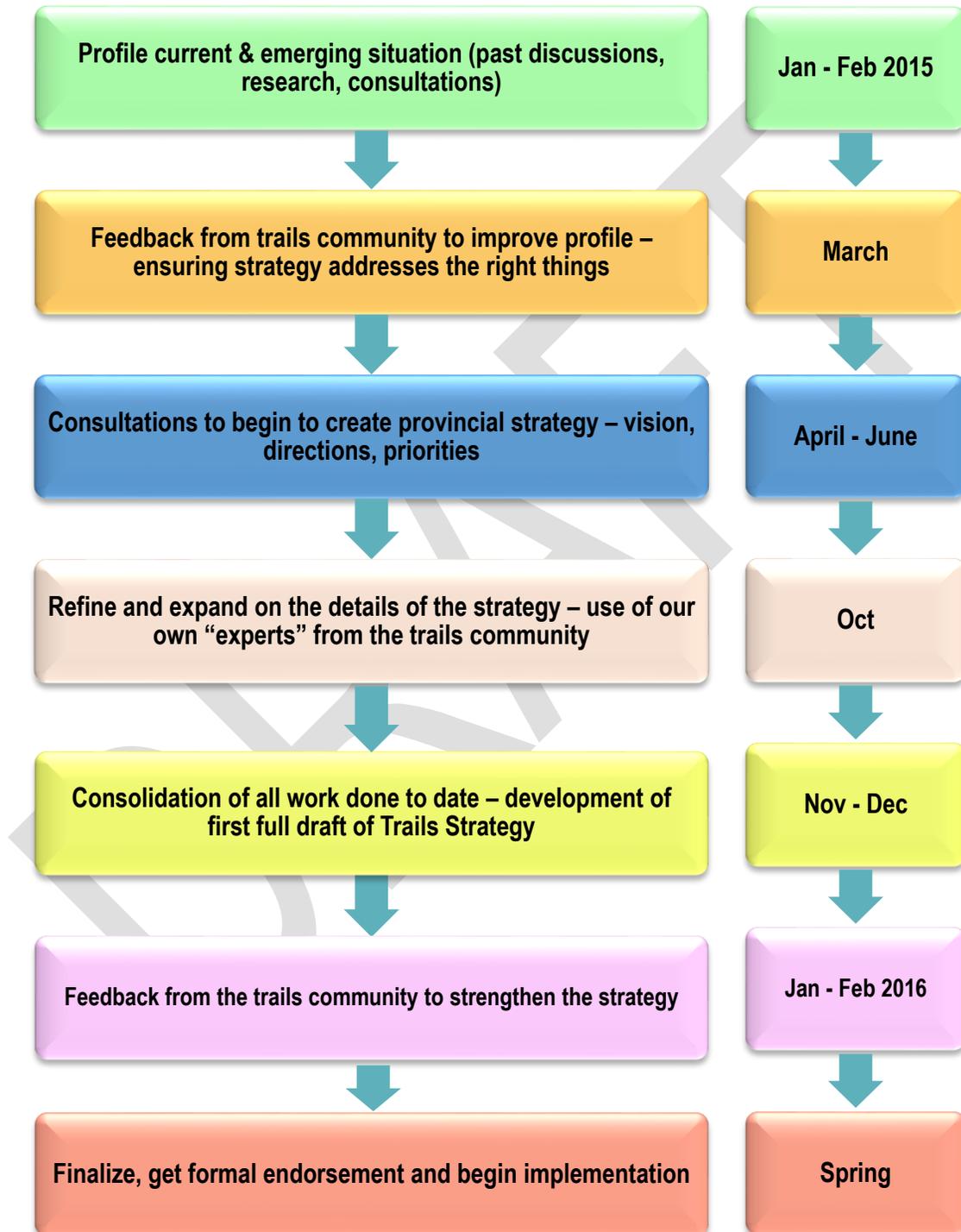
Trails Movement: inclusive of all those who have a stake in the development of trails in the province - for example: individuals, community groups, provincial organizations, businesses, landowners and the various levels of government, if they are involved in trails work, are all a part of the trails movement.

Trail User: anyone who participates in an activity on a trail.

Trail User Group: a group of trail users who join an organization that is dedicated to pursuing their preferred activity on trails.

Appendix II

Summary of the Steps Taken to Develop the Shared Strategy for Trails



Appendix III

List of Consultations and Documents Used in Development of Strategy

Consultations

1. Nova Scotia Trails Federation Board
2. Intergovernmental Committee on Trails
3. Thought-leaders in trails strategy development
4. On-line survey open to all trails stakeholders in the province – open from March 5th to 20th, 2015
5. 8 consultations conducted regionally, 1 conducted with Government, 1 with the Paddling Community, 1 with Provincial organizations – April to June 2015
6. 1 consultation with Health & Wellness Regional Reps - September 2015
7. Series of consultations with MKMPAL's – October 2015
8. Advisory Panels held with 40 “experts” from within the Trails community to flesh out the strategic goals and priorities – October 27th, 2015
9. Series of regional consultations to review draft Strategy – January to February 2016
10. “Engaging Women and Girls in Trails and the Nova Scotia Trails Movement” – research (survey and workshop) conducted 2015

Documents

1. Canadian Trails Study – National Trails Coalition December 2010
2. Trails Strategy for British Columbia – Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations,
3. Shared Strategy for Recreation in Nova Scotia, 2015
4. A Survey of Nova Scotia Hiking Trail Users – NS Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission, Human Resource Development Canada, January 1999
5. Update on the Ontario Trails Strategy, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, June 2013
6. Pathway to Success: A Strategy for Trail Development in Saskatchewan – Saskatchewan Trails Association, January 2009
7. Recreation Trails Strategy for British Columbia: Phase 1 – Background Report – Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, Ministry of Environment, May 2007
8. Saskatchewan Trails Strategy – Ministerial Brief
9. SANS Trail Strategy – Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia, December 2013
10. Trails 2010: A Trail Strategy for Colchester County – Municipality of Colchester, February 2005
11. Active2010: Ontario Trails Strategy – Ministry of Health Promotion, 2005
12. Reinvesting in the New Brunswick Trail System: A Long-Term Management Strategy – New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources, 2008
13. Victorian Trails Strategy – Victorian Trails Coordinating Committee (Australia), 2005

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Appendix IV

Members of the Trails Strategy Working Group

1. Sandy Anderson – Park Planner, Department of Natural Resources
2. Vanda Jackson – Executive Director, Nova Scotia Trails Federation
3. Rick Jacques – Trails Coordinator, Annapolis Valley Trails Coalition; VP of Nova Scotia Trails Federation
4. Blaise MacEachern – Chair, Trans Canada Trail Committee
5. Peter McCracken – Acting Active Transportation Consultant, Active Living Branch, Department of Health & Wellness
6. Hilary Paquet – Parks and Trails Coordinator, Municipality of the County of Colchester
7. Ted Scrutton – Past-President of Nova Scotia Trails Federation
8. Dawn Stegen – ICT Co-Chair; Director of Regional Services, Active Living Branch, Department of Health & Wellness
9. Steve Vines – Trails Consultant, Active Living Branch, Department of Health & Wellness
10. Holly Woodill – President of Nova Scotia Trails Federation
11. Heather Yule – Acting Manager, Development, Tourism Nova Scotia

Past Members

Rick Gilbert – retired ICT Co-Chair; retired Director of Corporate Strategy, Active Living Branch, Department of Health & Wellness

Robin Norrie – Manager of Recreation, Active Living Branch, Department of Health & Wellness