

A small commitment makes a big difference!

You can make a real difference and strengthen the voice for hiking in Ontario by becoming a member of one of our local trail clubs and organizations.

In Ontario, long distance hiking trail associations and walking/hiking clubs are heavily dependent on their membership revenue as a source of operating funds. It is a common misconception that trails and their affiliate clubs are government funded.

They are instead local grass roots organizations, run by volunteers that are dedicated to providing Ontarians and tourists with a comprehensive and attractive provincial trail network.

The volunteer contributions and responsibilities of local trail clubs include trail management, maintenance and activities such as guided hikes.

Membership in a local trail club is affordable. Depending on the club annual fees range from \$20.00 to \$50.00. That's it. A very small price to pay for the abundance of hiking and walking opportunities that are provided. An even smaller price to pay for the peace of mind that you are doing your part to protect the trails you love so much.

Please consider supporting Hike Ontario by becoming a member of one of our trail clubs.

Detailed information on our clubs and the individual benefits of membership can be found at:

www.hikeontario.com



A FEDERATION OF ONTARIO'S HIKING TRAIL GROUPS

Hike Ontario, is a non profit organization which represents the interests of walkers and hikers in the province of Ontario. We act as a liason amongst pedestrian trail users, governments and other organizations to increase public awareness of hiking and it's related benefits.

The membership of Hike Ontario is comprised of 24 long distance trail associations and walking/hiking clubs which have a combined membership of over 13,000 individuals.

OUR MANDATE

To promote recreational walking, hiking and trail development in Ontario

OUR MISSION

To provide support, education and representation while promoting hiking and walking in Ontario.

Contact Us:

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Ontario's Trails Are at Risk.

Find out how you can make a difference.

SAVE OUR TRAILS CAMPAIGN

Dear Hikers, Walkers and Concerned Citizens of Ontario ,

The future of hiking and walking trails in Ontario is threatened. The primary issue affecting trails is the crippling effect of liability insurance, because of exposure to unfounded or frivolous claims, which must be defended regardless of their validity.

The new Ontario Trails Strategy speaks to the serious threat that increasing insurance costs are having on Ontario's trails, with stakeholders reporting that the cost of liability insurance for trail organizations is becoming prohibitive.

Many volunteer hiking and trail organizations face extinction from increases to their liability insurance premiums. Last year the Sudbury Hiking Club closed due to the high cost of insurance premiums. The Avon Trail, Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association and Voyageur Trail have seen similar struggles because their supporting volunteer associations cannot afford the new high premiums, due to the high cost of insurance. Most trail organizations' liability insurance policies increased by over 40% in 2004 and by that much again in 2005.

WHY ARE TRAILS SO IMPORTANT?

The network of long-distance hiking trails in Ontario is an asset to the health of Ontarians, to our tourism and recreation industries, and is a vital part of the government's official, Ontario Trails Strategy. However, the Ontario hiking trails network is almost entirely created and maintained by volunteers. Most of these trails rely heavily on informal permissions from private landowners, who are increasingly withdrawing permission because of liability worries. The system is in danger of collapsing and would be almost impossible to re-create if the volunteer support were lost.

It is ludicrous that volunteers, who, through goodwill and hard work, create a path for walkers, should be judged to have created a liability

for themselves. If we build a bridge or steps to make passage easier and to reduce the impact of foot traffic on the environment, we should NOT be legally liable for the safety of users, who would otherwise have to scramble through the countryside's inherent hazards. Such implied liability is a major cause of the litigation that is so widespread in our society and the cause of such a chill on many worthwhile activities. The answer is not a dollar cap on settlement amounts, but a legislated redefinition of responsibility. Life is not risk-free; people in general must be made to take responsibility for their own activities and to stop trying to blame other people for their misfortunes or imprudence.

The same issues apply to almost all trail users and all volunteer-based organizations in the province. With 45,000 not-for-profit organizations and millions of volunteers, the impact could be huge. It is time for the trail supporters to join this common cause and work with provincial government for additional protection for landowners, trail organizations and volunteers. We need to band together with the snowmobile associations and the other trails groups to work with the government to create an amendment to the Occupiers Liability Act.

The future of the Ontario Trails Network is threatened. If we can't improve the legislative protection of the trails and trail organizations as they have in other jurisdictions like Nova Scotia, BC and New Hampshire, the future of Ontario's gift of access to the world of nature may be lost forever.



It is up to every one of us to help

SAVE THE TRAILS.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- 1) Become a regular user of the hiking and walking trails in Ontario . Support the Active 2010 program to help all citizens become active and commit to a healthy life style.
- 2) Become a member of one of our hiking or walking clubs and support their activities.
- 3) Bring the children of Ontario out onto the Trail Network to instil in them a love and appreciation for the natural world and the paths that lead them there.
- 4) The network of hiking trails in Ontario has been constructed and is maintained by volunteers - become a volunteer with one of the trail clubs and do your part.
- 5) Contact the Ministry of Health Promotion. Write letters, place phone calls and communicate your passion to SAVE THE TRAILS.

Please Write to:

Jim Watson, Minister

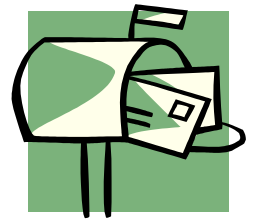
Ministry of Health Promotion

250 Yonge Street , 35th Floor

Toronto , Ontario , M5B 2N5

Phone: 416-326-4846

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The trail network in Ontario has created a half billion-dollar industry with more that 45,000 km of trail.

Do NOT allow Ontario 's Trails to be put at risk.

Don't wait till it's too late.

Please do your part NOW.