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Trails Association to Host Saskatchewan Trails Strategy Conference

The Saskatchewan Trails Association (STA) recently received funding from the Community Initiatives Fund to hold a two-day conference on developing a trails strategy for Saskatchewan. The conference will be held in Regina in either March or April 2008.

The overall goal of this project is to provide a vision for Saskatchewan's trails system. The conference is designed to help build community and awareness of recreational trails in Saskatchewan and engage multi-stakeholders in a dialogue that leads to a provincial trails strategy for STA and government departments and agencies. It is also intended to establish provincial trail construction and maintenance guidelines of multi-use trails (both summer and winter trails) that are sustainable and universal in design.

The conference will attract more than 100 participants from multi-stakeholder groups and individuals across the province who are interested in Saskatchewan's trails. Delegates will include, but are not limited to, provincial government and non-profit agencies, trail-based sport and recreation organizations (such as the Saskatchewan Cycling Association, Saskatchewan Horse Federation and Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association), municipal and regional government representatives (including the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), regional economic development associations (REDAs), trail users, volunteers and more.

Day one of the conference will focus on how to build trails in your community and building an active transportation strategy for your community. The "How to Build Trails" session will feature an established trail organizer, who will discuss the best practices for constructing and developing trails. The "Active Transportation Strategy" will inform participants on how communities can develop strategies that will encourage residents to run, walk, bike, skate or ski rather than drive to work and other locations. The evening will feature a meet and greet social and information session, as well as a trade show. A session, "From Rails to Trails," will discuss the process of converting abandoned rail lines in Saskatchewan to trails. Potential participants in the trade show may include Go For Green, the Trans Canada Trail Foundation, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, SPRA,

the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, the Saskatchewan Cycling Association, Cross Country Saskatchewan and more.

Day two of the conference will feature a full day of strategic planning sessions led by a professional facilitator. Government departments that are interested in Saskatchewan's trails will be invited to speak at the morning's first session. The Departments of Culture, Youth and Recreation, Saskatchewan Health, and Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation – along with Tourism Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association – will be among the invited participants to this session.

Representatives from the Governments of Alberta and Manitoba will also be invited to make presentations. The STA believes that Alberta and Manitoba will be valuable additions to these discussions because they currently have provincial trails strategies and provincial trails coordinators operating under the government's authority. Their knowledge will assist in the development of Saskatchewan's own provincial trails strategy.

Many of the key conference sessions will be video-taped, edited and available for Internet download from the STA's website, www.sasktrails.ca.

During the final session of the conference, delegates will break off into discussion groups to consider various options that need to be considered. The facilitator's final report will act as the framework for discussion that will lead to additional meetings and consultations that will culminate in the province's first provincial trails strategy.

The SPRA has agreed to be a conference partner by providing in-kind support through marketing and promoting this event to its members. STA would like to thank the SPRA for their unwavering support of this crucial initiative.

**The new Yorkton Trans Canada Trail Pavillion
Opens at noon on September 19, 2007.**