



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Trans Canada Trail Launches *Blahs to Ahhhs* Campaign in Support of Mental and Physical Health

Montreal, February 1, 2021 – The winter months in Canada bring opportunities for diverse outdoor activities. At the same time, winter can be a challenging season for people to maintain good mental, emotional and physical health – particularly during a global pandemic.

As Canadians look for safe outdoor opportunities that assist in coping with social isolation and with managing their physical and mental health, Trans Canada Trail (TCT) announces the launch of their *Blahs to Ahhhs Winter Campaign*, aimed at supporting Canadians as they navigate the coming months.

The campaign is also a response to recent polling data from a November national survey of Canadians on trail use, which TCT commissioned via Léger. Those results included data which showed that 95 per cent of Canadians' trail use is motivated by a desire to enhance their physical and mental health – with 100 per cent of Canadians aged 18-24 saying this was the case. The same poll outlined that 69 per cent of Canadians intend to keep using trails during the winter months.

“The Léger survey revealed that 50 per cent of Canadians have increased their trail use since March 2020. As the longest network of recreational trails in the world – and with 80 per cent of Canadians living within 30 minutes of The Great Trail – there are an abundance of safe spaces where Canadians can take the time they need to maintain and enhance their health and well-being. Taking care of ourselves and of one another can include a plan to regularly visit trails in your community as a way of managing the effects of social isolation that many people are facing,” said Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO of Trans Canada Trail.

“The Great Trail provides a safe space where they can spend time outside and recreate responsibly while respecting all public health guidelines. Shortly after the onset of COVID-19 we published national guidelines for safe trail use, which provide advice to trail users and trail operators to ensure that safety is paramount. We would urge all Canadians to recreate safely, which includes physical distancing, wearing a mask when with someone from outside your household, washing hands frequently, and, when using trails, carrying hand sanitizer,” McMahon added.

“Research has continuously shown the benefits of exercise for our mental health, our self-care, and building resiliency. It is a proactive and healthy coping strategy that helps to boost our mood, enhance our cognitive function, regulate our emotions and increase our motivation,” said Dr. Katy Kamkar, CAMH clinical psychologist. “During what can seem like a very cold, long winter, I encourage you find your local trail and safely go for a walk. Take in the sights, breathe deeply and escape into all that nature has to offer. It will work wonders on your mental health and well-being.”

The campaign will kick off on Monday February 1, at 12 noon (Eastern) with an online event featuring an expert panel discussion on tips for boosting mental health this winter. Four experts will join in the conversation:

- Valerie Pringle, Vice-Chair of the CAMH Foundation Board and Chair of the Trans Canada Trail Foundation Board (Moderator)
- Dr. Katy Kamkar, Clinical Psychologist, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
- Mercedes Nicoll, 4x Winter Olympian
- Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO, Trans Canada Trail

The event is free to attend and all are welcome. For more details visit: thegreattrail.ca/winter-live

Following this event TCT will launch an advertising campaign encouraging Canadians to get outside, safely and responsibly, and turn their winter *Blahs to Ahhhs*, as well as to share their favourite activity ideas with friends and family on social media. The campaign was developed by The Turn Lab and will be in market throughout the winter months. Campaign assets including photos and B-roll are available [HERE](#).

For Canadians interested in exploring the Trail in their community (close to home) this winter, resources such as a [Trail map](#), family-friendly winter activities, and a photo challenge contest are available at <https://thegreattrail.ca/wintermentalhealth>

Canadians are ready to turn winter blahs into ahhs

In a November 2020 survey to measure trail use since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, conducted by national polling and market research firm Léger, Canadians told us¹:

- trail usage is up close to 50% across all age groups
- 95 per cent use trails to enhance their mental health
- 95 per cent use trails for physical exercise and fitness
- 99 per cent use trails to spend time outdoors

Public health directives vary across the country and many include recommendations to stay home as much as possible so we would urge Canadians to find trail opportunities close to home. Combatting social isolation by getting outside while maintaining a two-metre distance from others, even for just a short period of time, allows us to remain physically distant, but socially together.

“The impact of connection – to one another and to the natural world – is incredibly important. We are finding new ways to balance individual and community needs during this time. Keeping up a regular routine of activity and social connection while respecting public health directives is essential to maintaining overall health,” McMahon noted.

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Resources for Media

- Interviews are available, on request, with:
 - Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO, Trans Canada Trail
Contact: Angela de Burger
Communications Advisor, Trans Canada Trail
905-510-8431 | media@tctrail.ca
 - Dr. Katy Kamkar, Clinical Psychologist, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
Contact: media@camh.ca
- A media kit including links to photos and video B-roll is also available [HERE](#).

¹ [Trail Use in Canada, Léger survey, 2020](#)

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. Supported by donations to Trans Canada Trail, 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. thegreattrail.ca