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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

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### **Blahs to Ahhhs – Get Out and Spread Joy This Winter**

Trans Canada Trail encourages Canadians to experience the mental health benefits of outdoor activity

**Montreal, January 17, 2022** –This Blue Monday, [Trans Canada Trail](https://www.transcanadatrail.ca) is launching its second annual “Blahs to Ahhhs” campaign ([tctrail.ca/blahs2ahhhs](https://tctrail.ca/blahs2ahhhs)) designed to encourage Canadians to beat the winter blahs and make the most out of the season by getting out on Canada’s 28,000-km national trail to run, walk, cross-country ski, trek, snowshoe or hike. “Blahs to Ahhhs” provides resources, expert advice and ideas for activities to help Canadians boost their mental and physical health. [Watch the video.](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to negatively affect the mental health of populations around the world, from children and youth to the elderly. In [Canada](#), even before the pandemic, poor mental health was ranked second among threats to childhood. And, suicide is the leading cause of death for children aged 10 to 14 in Canada and the second leading cause of death for youth aged 15 to 24. Health experts predict that a [crisis in mental health](#) will be the next pandemic to tackle in the years to come.

“[Blue Monday](#) is deemed the most depressing day of the year – with long and cold nights, the arrival of holiday bills and the dropping of New Year’s resolutions, it can be hard for many of us to have something positive to look forward to,” says Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO of Trans Canada Trail. “We’re also still navigating the global pandemic, which carries with it burdens and anxieties that can be difficult to manage.”

“As we continue in the darkest months of the year, the silver lining to these uncertain times is knowing that joy and mental well-being are literally at our doorsteps,” adds McMahon. “An accessible, safe, affordable and proven way of beating the winter blahs, the Trans Canada Trail is the perfect venue for families and friends to spend time together, get moving and feel better.”

In fact, people have been embracing trails in increasing numbers, especially during the pandemic. Recent Léger research conducted for Trans Canada Trail showed that 95% of Canadians have been using trails since the onset of COVID-19 [to enhance their mental and physical health](#). Sixty-nine per cent of respondents said they intend to use trails throughout the winter months.

## **New this year: Get out like Gurdeep and join the dance challenge!**

Join joy-spreader [Gurdeep Pandher](#) as he dances his way on trails in the Yukon to inspire more people to embrace winter and connect to their happiness through movement and nature. “When you smile at nature, it smiles back at you,” says Gurdeep. “Fallen autumn leaves are hopeful that spring will eventually come. Similarly, when there is hope in the hearts, it creates joy in gloominess. So, get on the Trans Canada Trail this winter and bring a smile to your mind, body and heart!”

We're challenging all Canadians to get out like Gurdeep and dance their #Blahs2Ahhhs away on the Trail! Find a spot on the Trail, film your dance then share it with us over social media with the hashtags **#Blahs2Ahhhs** and **#TransCanadaTrail**, for a chance to win a great prize! Watch [this space](#) to find out more.

## **Get tips from the experts**

On **Wednesday February 2, 2022, from 12-1 pm EST**, Trans Canada Trail will host a virtual expert panel discussion on how the Trail, and getting outside and being active this winter, contribute to our mental health. The panel will be moderated by former journalist Valerie Pringle, Chair of the CAMH Foundation Board and former chair of Trans Canada Trail’s Foundation Board, and will include a range of perspectives:

- Dr. Melissa Lem, a B.C.-based family physician, nature advocate and educator who is the founder and director of [Park Prescriptions \(PaRx\)](#). Melissa can validate mental health claims and offer science-backed research and insights
- Fatima Mulla, a mental health counsellor with [Kids Help Phone](#), who can speak to the issues challenging the mental well-being of kids and youth
- [Eleanor McMahon](#), President & CEO of Trans Canada Trail, who can speak to Trans Canada Trail’s Léger research insights, and the Blahs to Ahhhs campaign.

Learn more about the [panel discussion](#).

## **Find a trail section near you**

Winter activities on the Trail include walking, hiking, fat biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling. Check out our map to search [trail sections by activity](#).

**Interviews are available, on request, with Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO, Trans Canada Trail.**

## **Resources:**

- Blahs to Ahhhs: [tctrail.ca/blahs2ahhhs](https://tctrail.ca/blahs2ahhhs)
- Watch the Blahs to Ahhhs [video](#).
- Download images [here](#).
- Download B-roll [here](#).
- Download a graphic [map](#) of the Trans Canada Trail.
- Find your local section of the Trail [here](#).
- Read our Léger survey research on trail use in Canada: [June 2020](#); [November 2020](#); [August 2021](#).
- Read our [Conference Board of Canada report](#) on the health, environmental and economic benefits of Canada’s trail system.

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## **About Trans Canada Trail**

The Trans Canada Trail is the world's longest network of multi-use recreational trails. The Trail stretches more than 28,000 km – and continues to grow – across every province and territory. It's a showcase of Canada's diverse landscapes and cultures, and a sustainable national asset that fosters unity, collaboration and connectedness. Our national trail is managed by local trail groups and partners who work in conjunction with Trans Canada Trail, a registered charity. [tctrail.ca](http://tctrail.ca)