

Trails project planning launches



From left, Ontario Trillium Fund grant review team member Sherri Marcotte, North Hastings Fund Development Committee chair Cathy Trimble and Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Todd Smith celebrate the announcement of nearly \$43,000 in Trillium funding for the committee's North Hastings Non-Motorized Trail Master Plan. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

Soon people will be able to saunter on non-motorized trails in Bancroft and surrounding area thanks to the North Hastings Economic Development Committee.

An Ontario Trillium grant of nearly \$43,000 will help the committee launch the North Hastings Non-Motorized Trail Master Plan Project earlier this month.

"This is the launch of the planning process," said chair of the committee Cathy Trimble noting it will be looking to co-ordinate with volunteers, experts, those passionate about the sporting activities the trails could see, stewardship groups, municipalities and the county. The project's partners include Hastings County, Algonquin nations, Bancroft Trails Group, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health and Ontario Trails Council while the committee itself hosts members from seven North Hastings municipalities, Bancroft and Maynooth's business associations, the Bancroft Community Airport and the Bancroft and Area Stewardship Council.

"At this point we don't need people who want to build?" but we certainly want to keep a roster of their names because we'll definitely need them later on," she added.

The committee applied for funding in February and learned of its success in June. The entire sum will go into planning while the committee suspects it will apply for further funding and grow funding in years to come.

“We have to get the input from everybody. The biggest concern is the risk management to make sure that people understand what is in that plan that mitigates the risk,” said Trimble, noting municipal, Crown and private land loopholes. “We’re better together and we’ve got everybody at the table so that’s almost a first so that’s really exciting.”

The plan will be developed over the next 10 months. It will look at redeveloping existing trails such as the Heritage Trails and help set a framework for new trails for cycling, walking, hiking, snowshoeing, equestrian, canoe, kayak, in-line skating, mining and other activities.

“We’ve been going around to different campgrounds looking at the different trails that they’ve built. It’s fascinating the different types and styles they’ve built,” said Trimble. “You can have ones where you can push the baby carriage and you can do the bike riding or have a nice leisurely stroll with signs set up. Or there’s ones where you’re just going through and there will be a sign that tells you what you’re going to see: there might be a beaver dam but it’s a track and you have to be very careful how you follow it because you don’t want to get lost.”

Trimble said there is a large gap for Ontario Trails in North Hastings and surrounding area. Ontario Parks has identified many health benefits to getting outside including improving memory, getting a better night’s rest and lowering the risk of heart attack, she said. For more information or to get involved visit northhastings.com.