



# Greenways Nova Scotia

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## NSPACTS signs on to the Toronto Charter

NSPACTS has signed on to the “Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: A Global Call to Action” and invites individuals, organizations and governments to do likewise as physical activity is a “powerful investment in people, health, the economy and sustainability”. This was an easy decision for the NSPACTS directors to make at its July, 2010 meeting.

The Toronto Charter was developed by delegates at the 3rd International Conference on Physical Activity and Health in Toronto and ratified May 20, 2010, it recognises how healthy physical activity has been engineered out of most people’s lives in developed nations and is a continuing threat to health and wellbeing for developing countries.

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- What’s happening else where
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## An Active Transportation Tour Glyn Bissix, Kieran Pathways Society

On a warm May Monday evening, I ventured across the St. John River on the old railway bridge from downtown Fredericton, New Brunswick and what a pleasant AT experience. The bridge was busy to say the least with an eclectic mix of active travellers. Government workers leaving work either on foot or bicycle, young families with strollers or trailer bicycles, small groups of middle age women out for a stroll, four club cyclists decked out in Lycra and

carbon technology, ten to fifteen thirty something women following the beat of their fitness instructor, the occasional in-line skater, and me on my commuter bike. My wife Sue had returned to our nearby B & B as my mechanical overall of her bike was deficient. This is shared use as it should be—all human powered: a mix of active travellers and recreationists, happy to accommodate each others’ healthy, active and non-polluting lifestyle that requires no pre-

registration, activity fees, parking metres or pre-arranged baby sitters.

Moving on to Quebec City with a mix of sun, cloud, rain and an ominous thunderstorm looming, such changeable weather was no deterrent for Quebecers. With a new set of peddles Sue joined me on this morning. When polled on its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration, the City didn’t choose a new stadium, convention centre, or airport renovation;



Boulevard Chaplain, Quebec City

**The Montreal Bicycle Festival is the largest bicycle festival in the world; it seems to be the annual right of passage for Montrealers from six to eighty-six.**



The Montreal Bike Festival

## An Active Transportation Tour: Glyn Bissix, Kieran Pathways Society (con'd)

rather it wanted its River back! What it asked for and what it got was a magnificent walkway and bikeway alongside the St. Lawrence River, leading to and through Old Quebec City. Long denied by a four lane, divided roadway, most would suggest that getting their river back was an unrealistic pipedream but this belies Quebecers' resolve. With cooperation from the City, The Provincial DOT and Velo Quebec, planners and engineers moved the road over to make way for the pathway-- simple really given political will and healthy vision!

Last stop Montreal, arriving on highway 40 during the evening rush hour but thankfully travelling in the opposite direction. While no one should be fooled that Montreal has solved its transportation problem, too many cars and too few buses and bicycles, it has made major strides in promoting active transportation. One bicycle

route alone, from the north to downtown, has as many as 10,000 separate journeys on a fine day. Think of the carbon emissions saved, the traffic congestion relieved, and the parking spaces freed with the added bonus of healthy active travel enjoyed by so many Montrealers with this single travelway.

The Montreal Bicycle Festival is the largest bicycle festival in the world; it seems to be the annual right of passage for Montrealers from six to eighty-six. Attracting over 25,000 each year, this is an amazing spectacle of organisational ingenuity, volunteer dedication and rider resolve. Friday night's Tour la Nuit, a twenty kilometre jaunt around the streets to Olympic Stadium attracted 15,000 riders on a warm spring evening while Sunday's ride, 50 kilometres around the Island on a very wet, windy and

cool Sunday, still "entertained" in excess of twenty thousand diehards. This is a wonderful celebration of active travel by any measure, teenage marshals at ever corner and cross road screaming encouragement, jazz bands under umbrellas and tarps entertaining riders passing by, and young and old families perched on their verandas applauding and encouraging the thousands of riders as they pass by. Their hands must have been very sore and their voices rasp as the last riders struggled by.

La Belle Province and Montrealers in particular have clearly embraced an AT culture that has garnered considerable political momentum that can only benefit their healthcare system and collective pocketbooks in the years to come. We clearly have cousins to emulate and look up to.

## Toronto Charter continued

"Throughout the world, technology, urbanisation, increasingly sedentary work environments and automobile-focused community design have engineered much physical activity out of daily life. Busy lifestyles, competing priorities, changing family structures and lack of social connectedness may also

be contributing to inactivity.

Opportunities for physical activity continue to decline while the prevalence of sedentary lifestyles is increasing in most countries, resulting in major negative health, social and economic consequences."

The Charter embraces nine principles all of which are interwoven in NSPACTS own guiding principles and actions. They are:

1. Adopt evidence based strategies that target the whole population as well as specific population sub groups, particularly those facing the greatest barriers;

## Toronto Charter continued

2. Embrace an equity approach aimed at reducing social and health inequalities and disparities of access to physical activity;

3. Address the environmental, social and individual determinants of physical inactivity;

4. Implement sustainable actions in partnership at national, regional and local levels and across multiple sectors to achieve greatest impact;

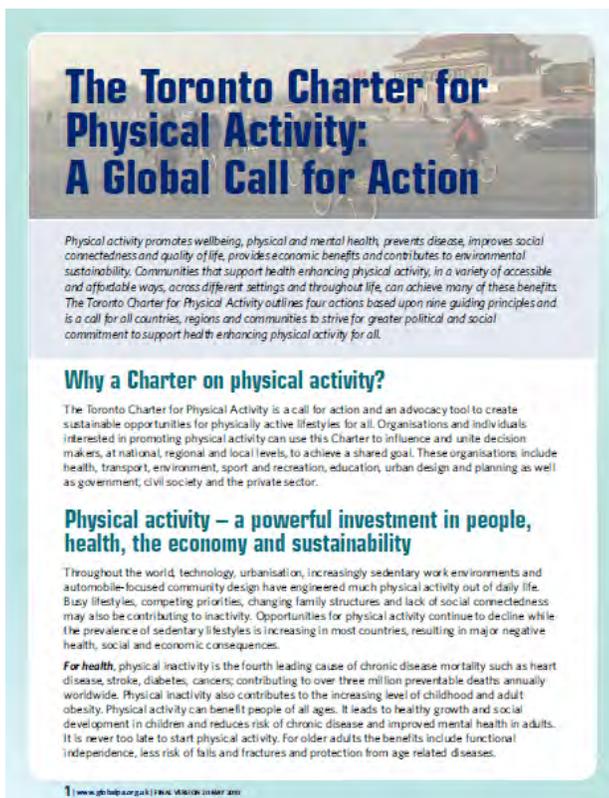
5. Build capacity and support training in research, practice, policy, evaluation and surveillance;

6. Use a life-course approach by addressing the needs of children, families, adults and older adults;

7. Advocate to decision makers and the general community for an increase in political commitment to and resources for physical activity;

8. Ensure cultural sensitivity and adapt strategies to accommodate varying ‘local realities’, contexts and resources;

9. Facilitate healthy per-



sonal choices by making the physically active choice the easy choice.

### The Charter’s framework for action:

This Charter calls for “concerted action across four key areas. This action should involve governments, civil society, academic institutions, professional associations, the private sector, and

other organisations within and outside the health sector, as well as communities themselves. These four action areas are distinct, yet complementary, building blocks for successful population change.” They are:

1. Implement a national policy and action plan
2. Introduce policies that support physical activity
3. Reorient services and funding to prioritise physical activity in education, in transportation and planning; in planning and environment; in [the] workplace; in sport, parks and recreation; and in health.
4. Develop partnerships for action.

You can read more about the Charter and signify your support by accessing [www.globalpa.org.uk](http://www.globalpa.org.uk) on the Internet. Please circulate this to as many people and decision-makers as possible and urge them to sign on and take action.



A Montreal Bicycle Route



Walking the dog in Wolfville

By Dawn Neil and  
Doug MacLeod

## Atlantic View Trail, Lawrencetown Nova Scotia

There are two Lawrence-towns in Nova Scotia, one in the Annapolis Valley and the other along the eastern shore of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). Subject to the elements of wind, salt and tides, the 10 km long Atlantic View Trail in HRM runs along the former railway corridor that was once integral to the local heritage of so many adjacent communities.

This railway was completed in 1912 and operated until 1984 with up to twelve trains per day travelling between Dartmouth and Upper Musquodoboit. Some trains transported sand and gravel extracted from beaches until the Beaches Act in 1971 ended what now seems like an unbelievable assault on our coastland environment. After abandonment, the NS Department of Natural Resources recognized this as a natural amenity with all of its diverse life forms and as a result earmarked the area as parkland.

Viewplane lands and coastal drumlin hills along with a section of the former railway right-of-way were combined and designated under the Parks Act as the 'Lawrencetown - Cole Harbour Coastal Heritage Park System'.

Jump ahead ten years or so to 1999 and the Atlantic View Trail Association was formed by volunteers with assistance from the Halifax



Atlantic View Trail, HRM.

The trail development team jumped into action to focus full-time on building an outstanding linear park system.



OHV Trail,  
Annapolis County

Regional Development Agency. Community consultation proved very challenging because of the unique requirements of the Parks Act whereby motorized and equestrian use was not permitted.

Simultaneously other rail trail groups in the Province were developing trails on Crown Lands without such restrictions. It took considerable time to persuade the local community and provincial advocates for ATV's, motorbikes and horses that these modes were inappropriate on this trail.

Once it was realised that public opinion was against them and the Provincial Cabinet was unlikely to change this park's status, the protesting dissipated. The trail development team jumped into action to focus full-time on building an outstanding linear park system.

There were major engineering challenges along the way such as a marshy area where the old rail bed had literally sunk, one concrete and three wooden bridges required restoration, and several sections of causeway passing through salt water marshes and subject to tidal/wave action required reinforcement.

This section of the Trans Canada Trail was envisioned as an 'outdoor classroom' with heritage and

nature interpretation themes and served to complement other regional attractions such as Lawrencetown-Conrad beach, Lawrencetown Beach and MacDonald House.

Today, the rail trail is part of HRM's Active Transportation system proudly promoting healthy, active living. The rail trail provides safe commuting and access to recreational opportunities throughout the community. The trail regularly welcomes both teachers and students cycling to and from school and people are frequently seen cycling from Shearwater to the beach instead of driving.

Since the trail is non-motorized, it has proven to be much more sustainable and less costly to maintain than neighbouring motorized trails in HRM. Potholes are virtually nonexistent after ten years of continual use while motorized rail trails are readily left with ridges and potholes where spinning wheels displace aggregate after each passage.

## A Prescription for Health

Physical inactivity has overtaken smoking as the number 1 public health risk in Nova Scotia. It's seen as a root cause for the current epidemic of obesity, diabetes, and many other illnesses. So what can doctors do?

There has been a strange paradox in many communities. While municipalities have invested heavily in recreation facilities, sports and exercise programs, there has been a rapid and worrisome increase in physical inactivity rates. It's now estimated that 50 per cent of Nova Scotians don't get enough exercise to maintain their physical health ... and it shows.

Recent research suggests the "built environment" has more impact on rates of physical activity in a community than the availability of soccer fields and hockey rinks. Urban planners now refer to communities as "obese-o-genic" if they lack one fundamental ingredient – infrastructure for active transportation or AT.

AT refers to "human powered" travel such as walking and bicycling. AT is more about walking or cycling to school, work or shopping than recreation. In fact, it's because AT can be incorporated into routine daily activities that it's so valuable for increasing physical activity and health.

In 2007, Doctors Nova Scotia passed its first resolution to promote AT. In June, 2009, it went further at its annual general meeting by unanimously supporting the following resolution:

By Dr. Keith MacCormick and Dr. Chris Milburn (reprinted from doctorsNS July/August 2009).

*Doctors Nova Scotia recognises that walking and bicycling form the core activities in a physically active culture, and should be promoted as the top priority activities when developing trails and pathways, as part of the battle against physical inactivity, diabetes, obesity and other medical illnesses.*

The resolution is a major step forward in promoting a healthier trails policy, and is consistent with the Canadian Medical Association's new policy on AT.

To date provincial government policy hasn't prescribed the use of trails based on health, environment, or behavioural concerns. By recognising that the promotion of AT is more important (from a health-care perspective at least) than the promotion of motorised recreation, there's finally an order of priority when developing trails.

As always a value system is needed to fairly resolve conflicts.

On trails in Nova Scotia, the biggest conflict is between motorised and non-motorised trail activities. On one hand, recommendations from the World Health Organisation, Canada's Go for Green, individual trail polls, and community groups say that vulnerable trail users like walkers and cyclists should be separated from motorised traffic in order to optimise their participation. On the other hand, the off highway vehicle groups (all terrain vehicles, dirt bikes and snowmobiles) claim trails can be safely shared whether motorised or not, so access shouldn't be denied.



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Doctors Nova Scotia's resolution to lobby for walking and bicycling as top priorities when developing the province's trails and pathways is a major step toward combating physical inactivity.

The debate over which activities should be allowed on which trails in Nova Scotia will probably continue for some time, but it's timely that guidelines for prioritization be developed that reflect the current crises in health care and the environment. (Dr. Michael Cussen was a contributor to this article).

## Found: The Trans Canada Trail by Barbara Bishop

NSPACTS congratulates the Trans Canada Trail for its Greenways statement. Well done! Perhaps we can find our way back now.

In Nova Scotia, the Trans Canada Trail exists in tourist guides and maps, with the little hiker icon flagging it. But on the ground,

few crumbs of TCT are visible. Out-of-province hikers or cyclists are stunned to realize that most of those flagged trails are actually Off-Highway Vehicle trails. Traces of the Valerie Pringle promise are faint here, and rare is the occurrence of a green corridor connecting communities, a trail that provides safe travel for the smallest child on a tricycle, the arthritic senior on her daily walk, or the student cycling to school.

The TCT should be here. After all, the foundation was carefully laid for it. In 1989 we passed the Trails Act, followed later by Rails to Trails policies and guidelines, all of which anticipated the TCT, in the style of the U.S. Rails to Trails Conservancy model. We were ready.

TCT Foundation Financial statements show that on December 31, 2002, the Foundation reached agreements and accepted donations from the Canadian

Pacific Railway of "beneficial interests in railway rights-of-way for trail development", with a fair market value of \$37,165,730." and from the Canadian National Railway with a fair market value of \$10,000,000."

The Foundation intended to transfer the title of the interests in cooperation with provincial and territorial partners, and in

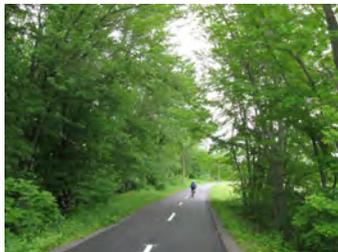
**Out-of-province hikers or cyclists are stunned to realize that most of those flagged trails are actually Off-Highway Vehicle trails.**

2002 it donated the CPR corridors, valued at \$10,035,270. to the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia "for trail construction."

From the Department of Natural Resources 2002-2003 Accountability Report, we read, "A total of 225 kilometres of abandoned rail corridor, running from New Minas to

Yarmouth, was acquired by the province at no cost. The corridor, previously owned by the Dominion Atlantic Railway, was received from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation, and will be managed by the department and the Sport and Recreation Commission. These lands will be available for the future development of community-based recreational trails."

Potential volunteers began to meet. There was talk of scenic, Active Transportation trails with benches and historic plaques, and partnerships with environmental groups. Our municipalities, towns, and villages would be destinations. But then we got lost. In some cases, Off-Highway Vehicle advocates quietly secured Letters of Authority over sections of the railbed early in the game, as was the case with the South Shore Annapolis Valley Recreational Trails Association. In other areas, newly formed county trail groups learned that to be funded, they must become arms of local and provincial OHV organizations. Volunteers dropped out, or never appeared. Why would they build trails in the communities they served when they saw those trails as sources of conflict, stress, noise, and



Fredericton Bike Trail

*"Hansel comforted Gretel and said, "Wait, when the moon comes up I will be able to see the crumbs of bread that I scattered, and they will show us the way back home." The moon came up, but when Hansel looked for the crumbs, they were gone. The many thousands of birds in the woods had found them and pecked them up."*

-From Hansel and Gretel, by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm



The Fredericton Rail-Trail Bridge

TCT Foundation Financial statements show that on December 31, 2002, the Foundation reached agreements and accepted donations from the Canadian

**Found (con't)**

pollution? The field was left to ATV and snowmobile groups. From there, with no public debate on the matter, millions began to flow into the motorized trails built by the OHV-dominated trail groups, who now claimed their "right to ride" through these communities.

So there we were. "Shared Use", the TCT description of Active Transportation trails, became "share with OHV's". "Community Recreational Trails" meant OHV recreation first.

Communities who sought a healthy, green, peaceful trail were made out to be the bad guys, in spite of several highly credible studies and surveys indicating that when asked the actual question, as many as 85% of Nova Scotians preferred walking and cycling trails, and wanted restrictions placed on motorized activity on trails.

When the Town of Annapolis Royal opted for Greenway-type walking and cycling trails, the Minister of Health Promotion actually wrote a letter scolding the Town

for creating hardship for OHV users! Strange, but true.

As frustration boiled over, landowners who had to put up with the nuisance sought and received significant tax rebates as their homes were devalued, a tiny village filed a lawsuit; a stretch of trail between

two non-motorized sections was to be the subject of compromise, meaning motorized use. The rail beds themselves took a pounding, deeply rutted by the deep treads of ATV's, generating the need for more funds for maintenance. In winter, cross-country skiers or snowshoers found that an icy "groomed" snowmobile trail is a scary place to meet a vehicle barely under control and capable of

hitting well over 60 miles per hour, coming straight at you.

But when a situation swings too far one way, it has a way of swinging back. We thought the Trans Canada Trail was lost, the crumbs long since gobbled. But in March 2009, the TCT adopted at their highest executive level a wonder-

ful Greenway statement. They intend to move this vision forward and complete our national dream by 2017. Their Nova Scotia partner, the Nova Scotia Trails Federation, has signed an agreement to support the TCT Greenway.

Yet money continues to flow to ATV clubs to build their "industrial" trails.

We have a new government, and in the end, they will decide if Nova Scotia can find its way back.

NSPACTS has given them some sound advice through our Position Paper, and that way home is for the entire rail corridor to be designated an Active Transportation, non-motorized Greenway. It's either that, or our otherwise beautiful province will be the stumbling block to complete the Trans Canada Trail.

Not only would this be a national embarrassment for Nova Scotia, our rural communities will be stuck in the costly ruts of OHV trails for years to come. Instead of moving into the twenty-first century building a healthier, greener province the turmoil of the past decade will be reprised with its decreasing health status—now being among the country's most obese population, loss of opportunity to build green tourism and a healthy place to attract modern industry and commerce. With this comes lasting property depreciation and social deprivation for those of us who live in some of the most historic and picturesque communities in the country.

**Abstracted from the Partnership Agreement Between: Nova Scotia Trails Federation (hereinafter referred to as "NST") and Trans Canada Trails – Sentier Transcanadien (hereinafter referred to as "TCT") Dated April 21, 2010.**

3.1 TCT and NST agree that:

(a) The trail is a National Legacy project encouraging Canadians to explore and discover Canada's natural and cultural heritage; promoting active living and healthy lifestyles; attracting international visitors to experience the Canadian outdoors, culture, people and places; contributing to meaningful economic stability; and fostering community involvement and national pride.

(b) The primary purpose of this Partnership Agreement is to enable collaboration among the Parties to achieve the goal of building and connecting the Trail across Canada by 2017;

(c) The Trail will be built according to the approved TCT guidelines, policies, and plans; ....

# Nova Scotians Promoting Active-transportation on Community Trails Society

E-mail Address:  
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Create Active, Healthy and  
Sustainable Community Trails  
and Pathways for all Nova  
Scotians.



We're on the Web  
<http://nspacts.ca/>

NSPACTS Purpose is to:

1. Promote and create sustainable trails and pathways that accommodate all forms of Active Transportation including mobility aids.
2. Actively advocate and promote people powered trails.
3. Challenge trail policies within government that fail to embrace and promote active living.
4. Advocate for policies that protect the health of our communities by promoting laws that prohibit excessive noise and other forms of pollution.
5. Promote the use of trails and pathways in active living educational programs.
6. Support affiliated organization, groups, towns and municipalities that advance the above goals.
7. Establish a library of reference material.
8. Support the development of trails and pathways through the community development model.
9. Recognize human powered forms of travel.
10. Support each other, share information, and develop strategies to create a common voice for our goals.

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## NSPACTS Provincial Policy Statement for the Rails to Trails Corridor Goal Statement:

The goal of NSPACTS is to promote the development and maintenance of an Active Transportation (non-motorized) trail network on the former rail lines of Nova Scotia. We think this non-motorized status should be formally designated under the provincial trails act.

Consistent with other Maritime Provinces, NSPACTS envisages the Rails to Trails, Trans Canada Trail, AT Corridor as the principle alternative transportation trail corridor connecting Nova Scotia Communities.

