

Feds support trail expansion on Oak Ridges Moraine



Trail infrastructure in Oak Ridges got a boost from the Federal Government last week.

On Thursday, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leah Taylor Roy announced a grant of \$246,005 to the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to enhance the Oak Ridges trail corridor, which is part of the lake-to-lake connection.

Taylor Roy announced the grant on behalf of Minister Filomena Tassi, through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) and through the Canada Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF).

"As the local MP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, I'm always pleased to recognize the work that has been done in our community, in particular by the TRCA," said MP Taylor Roy. "We know how important these spaces are for people's mental health, physical health, and communities. Having these green spaces is so important and we need to continue to protect them. Thank you for your part."

"It is going to connect the Oak Ridges Corridor here to the Bayview Avenue Lake to Lake trail and people can pretty much make it all the way down now, which is great. It is utilizing modern trail building techniques, compliant with the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) and connecting the existing off-road trail to Bayview Avenue. I really believe that investments like these in our green infrastructure are truly important investments for us to be making and I think they not only benefit us in the long run, in terms of climate change but into the short run, in terms of people's health and wellbeing."

TRCA CEO John MacKenzie said this investment has been the largest investment received through the Canada Community Renewal Fund and the largest investment in their assets they have seen in "decades."

"I am pleased to be a part of this extensive effort to help steward the Oak Ridges Conservation Reserve," he said. "I have had a number of amazing experiences in this geography over the years. I saw a red-shouldered hawk for the first time about two kilometres that way on a kettle wetland, I spent a great deal of time in the Jefferson Forest "hummingbirds, scarlet tanagers, all these special species are here in the Oak Ridges Moraine and it's really beautiful. We have 175 hectares of mature forests in this area, wetlands, meadows, kettle lakes, and it is actually an important area in the bowl of the Oak Ridges Moraine: It's at the top of the Rouge, the top of the Humber, and the top of the Don River. We have these incredible headwaters meeting here and it is a space the community is really using."

"The Oak Ridges Lake to Lake trail project, this 630m long trail, is really an important part of the puzzle and connecting this whole area. I want to say thank you to the team, Adam (Dembe), Maryam (Iler) and so many others who are involved, on behalf of the

TRCA. There has been support from York Region for this and also strong support from the City of Richmond Hill and members of the community. I think it's really important that there is so much community stewardship as well for this.

?With this new trail segment there will be greater access to the Oak Ridges corridor reserve and it is going to be part of an ongoing effort to increase monitoring, stewardship, presence of people out here, but also an appreciation of nature. This is an incredible area, it has a lot of biodiversity. We still have nationally-threatened species that live in this area, and it's a way to ensure the trails are sensitively designed to protect what's worth protecting and also so people can enjoy this beautiful area.?

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