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International Appalachian Trail Progressing In Western Newfoundland

One of eastern North America's most famous hiking trails is continuing development in Newfoundland and Labrador. With a Provincial Government investment of \$69,177, the International Appalachian Trail is forging ahead with a Western Newfoundland walking trail from Port aux Basques to Crow Head, just east of L'Anse aux Meadows.

"Extension of the renowned International Appalachian Trail has the potential to attract hikers to the western region and boost the province's adventure tourism industry," said the Honourable Shawn Skinner, Minister of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development. "The Provincial Government is committed to investing in initiatives that strengthen regional economies and capitalize on the area's beautiful mountain fiords, rugged coastline, and wildlife."

The 3,500 km Appalachian Trail began development in the 1920s and extends from Georgia to Maine. In the early 1990s it crossed the border into Canada as the International Appalachian Trail and continues through New Brunswick and Quebec to Newfoundland and Labrador. The Newfoundland and Labrador portion will encompass 1,200 km along the Long Range Mountains. Collectively, the Appalachian Trail network has attracted millions of hikers from the Eastern United States and around the world.

"This new extension of the Appalachian Trail will be an asset for Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism industry," said the Honourable Clyde Jackman, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. "Increasingly, people are visiting particular regions of our province for the trail systems. In fact, according to the most recent Exit Survey conducted, 80 per cent of non-resident visitors participated in hiking or pleasure walking during their stay in the province."

In 2008 the Corner Brook-based IATNL (International Appalachian Trail Newfoundland and Labrador) began development of three new trail sections: the Lewis Hills Trail from Cold Brook Road across the Lewis Hills and Cabox (the highest point on the island of Newfoundland) to Serpentine Lake; Blow Me Down Trail from Serpentine Lake across the Blow Me Down Mountains to Benoit's Cove; and the Devil's Bite Trail in the Parsons Pond watershed on the Great Northern Peninsula. Scheduled for completion in 2009, they bring to seven the number of trail sections developed by the IATNL since 2006.

"With our diverse and unique outdoor product found nowhere else in Eastern North America, Newfoundland and Labrador is poised to become the highlight of the Appalachian Trail system," said Paul Wylezol, Chairperson of the IATNL. "From glacier-carved fiords and pristine river valleys, 1,000 foot waterfalls and mountains, to spectacular coastlines with icebergs and whales, sunrises and sunsets, we've got an abundance of adventure resources; This at a time when many baby-booming adventurers have already hiked the more renowned and well-trodden trail sections in the United States."

"An initiative such as the International Appalachian Trail encourages regions to work together for the common good which ultimately benefits the overall economy of the western region," said Minister Skinner. "The trail network benefits the province, communities, businesses, and residents. With its development, subsequent employment and business opportunities are anticipated to grow as well."

Funding for this project is provided through the Provincial Government's Regional/Sectoral Diversification Fund (RSDF). RSDF is a \$5-million fund that provides non-repayable contributions to economic development agencies for initiatives that address regional and sectoral development and diversification.

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