

Ontario CYCLE TOURISM Forum 2009



Final Report and Recommendations

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Ontario Cycle Tourism Forum 2009

Overview

The Ontario Cycle Tourism Forum was held on January 23, 2009 at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto, and brought together cycle tourism stakeholders to discuss business development opportunities and challenges of this growing tourism market segment in Ontario.

The key objectives of the forum were to:

- Provide innovative and engaging presentations by an international panel on best practices for cycle tourism development and promotion in Ontario;
- Increase the awareness and importance of province-wide infrastructure and way-finding signage for cycle tourism development; and,
- Establish Ontario as a leading cycle tourism destination in North America.

The forum featured presentations from world-leading cycle tourism organizations and provided market profiles of specific regions, successful tourist product and marketing examples, business development case studies, best practices in infrastructure and signage, and evaluation of regional growth opportunities.

Over 160 delegates attended from across Ontario and beyond representing destination marketing organizations, municipal and provincial government, tour operators, non-profit organizations, and established cycling associations.

Partners and Supporters

Financial and in-kind support for the Ontario Cycle Tourism Forum was generously provided by 13 organizations including municipal, provincial government and non-profit.

Presenting Partner:

Government of Ontario
- Ministry of Tourism

Forum Partners:

City of Toronto
Government of Ontario
- Ministry of Transportation
- Ministry of Energy and
Infrastructure
Fairmont Royal York
Metrolinx
Mountain Equipment Co-op
Waterfront Regeneration Trust

Forum Supporters:

Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership
Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
Tourism Toronto
VIA Rail Canada

Reception Sponsor:

Consulate General of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands

Marketing and Promotion

The event and its partners were promoted through targeted communications, brochures, registration materials, and online at www.ontariocycletourismforum.ca. The forum was promoted and partners were publicly acknowledged several lead-up events including the 2008 Ontario Tourism Summit, Waterfront Regeneration Trust Partners' Meeting and during the Ontario Cycle Tourism Forum. A cycle tourism 'mini-workshop' was held at the Ontario Tourism Summit that helped to develop interest and discussion on the topic.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the website <http://www.ontariocycletourismforum.ca/agenda>. The page features the Ontario CYCLE Tourism Forum logo, navigation links (Home, Agenda, Venue, Registration, Contact Us), and a banner with the text "cycle tourism is growing!". Below the banner, there is a photo of four cyclists. The main content area is titled "Agenda" and lists the following items:

- Friday, January 23, 2009
- 8:00 Registration & Continental Breakfast
- 9:00 Welcome

On the left side of the page, there are logos for the Lead Organization (Transportation Options), Presenting Partner (Ontario), and Forum Partners (Toronto, Fairmont Royal York, Mountain Equipment Co-op, and Metrolinx).

Over 1,000 brochures and postcards were distributed across Ontario and to targeted organizations in Canada and the United States.

An interview on CBC Radio Metro Morning was also secured on January 23 to promote the event publicly.

The graphic is a promotional poster for the Ontario Cycle Tourism Forum 2009. It features the event title, date (January 23, 2009), and location (Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto). The website www.OntarioCycleTourismForum.ca is also listed. The graphic includes logos for the Lead Organization (Transportation Options) and Presenting Partner (Ontario), along with a photo of two cyclists riding on a road.

Guest Speakers, Chairs and Moderators

The morning keynote speakers were focused on inspiring stakeholders and demonstrating the possibilities of cycle tourism. They accomplished this through international success stories that highlighted best practices. The afternoon brought the challenge back home to Ontario by including local tourism leaders and discussing concrete next steps for the tourism industry.



Imperial Room, Fairmont Royal York



Burkhard Mausberg introducing Lukas Stadtherr of SwitzerlandMobility

Forum Chairs:

Burkhard Mausberg, President, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
Marlaine Koehler, Executive Director, Waterfront Regeneration Trust

Special Guest Speakers:

The Honourable Monique Smith, Minister of Tourism
Jean-François Pronovost, Executive Director, Vélo Québec Association
Lukas Stadtherr, Co-director, Velobüro/SwitzerlandMobility
Eric Nijland, Director, Dutch National Cycling Platform
Richard Bonds, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Tourism Office

Panel Moderators:

Michael Lawley, Executive Director, Muskoka Tourism
Bill Allen, President, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

Panel Presenters:

Councillor Brian Baty, Chair, Regional Niagara Bicycling Committee
Jean Charbonneau, Manager, Lands (Quebec/Capital Pathway), National Capital Commission
Daniel Egan, Manager, Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure, City of Toronto
Leslie Bruce, Chief Marketing Officer, Butterfield and Robinson Inc.
Anne Marie Forcier, Executive Director, Rideau Heritage Route
Pat Macdonald, General Manager and CEO, St. Lawrence Parks Commission

> **View full agenda:** <http://www.ontariocycletourismforum.ca/agenda>

Special Guest Speakers



Ministry of Tourism

The Honourable Monique Smith, Minister of Tourism, gave Opening Remarks on the growing market for cycle tourism in Ontario. During her speech, she spoke of several emerging cycle tourism products, and announced funding for the popular Bike Train Initiative to expand on new routes reaching destinations in Northern, Eastern and Southwestern Ontario.

Vélo Québec Association

Jean-François Pronovost, Executive Director of Vélo Québec Association, told the story of the long, successful and ongoing journey of Vélo Québec. He talked of the progression from a grassroots initiative, to developing formal partnerships with government, managing large scale projects, and the recent launch of the internationally recognized la Route verte, the province's 4,000km and growing cycle route network. The result is a provincially coordinated effort to develop and promote cycle tourism products and events that generate more than \$130 million dollars every year. To ensure continued market growth, the province, regions and municipalities recently announced \$13.4 million over the next 5 years to further develop la Route verte.



> **View presentation:** <http://ontariocycletourismforum.ca/images/stories/pdf/quebec.pdf>

SwitzerlandMobility

Lukas Stadtherr, Co-director of Velobüro and member of the Management Board of SwitzerlandMobility, presented the unique and world-leading infrastructure and programs launched in Switzerland to develop and encourage a growing cycle tourism market. Partnerships with regional and national governments, transit and rail providers, tour operators and the accommodation sector have enabled the 20,000km national human-powered mobility network, includes cycling, mountain biking, hiking, inline skating and canoeing. With an annual budget of 3.5 million Swiss francs, SwitzerlandMobility and its partners project to generate 500 million Swiss francs per year.



> **View presentation:** <http://ontariocycletourismforum.ca/images/stories/pdf/switzerland.pdf>

Dutch National Cycling Platform



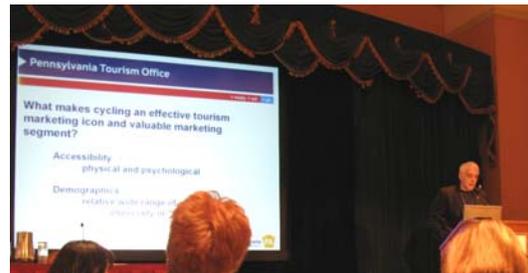
The Netherlands is known around the world as a leading cycle tourism destination, and Eric Nijland, Director of the Dutch National Cycling Platform further solidified that position. He described the 4,500kms of local, regional, national and international cycling infrastructure, along with innovative wayfinding, rural and urban product development, and seamless integration with train and bus transport. These features help attract

600,000 cycle tourist visitors generating 350 million euros per year. Mr. Nijland advised stakeholders in attendance not to hesitate with market ready products, and to develop cycle tourism in Ontario relative to the province's assets, landscapes and infrastructure available.

> **View presentation:** <http://ontariocycletourismforum.ca/images/stories/pdf/netherlands.pdf>

Pennsylvania Tourism Office

Lead by Richard Bonds, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Tourism Office, the state has launched several new media marketing campaigns that highlight cycle tourism to promote their overall brand. Though cycle tourism is a relatively small sole activity market in Pennsylvania, the “outdoor” segment represents over \$500 million in economic impact overall. The Great Allegheny Passage, a tow path connecting Pittsburgh with Washington DC, was highlighted as an example where significant economic impact is generated. This route generates \$12-15 million in direct spending per year.



> **View presentation:** <http://ontariocycletourismforum.ca/images/stories/pdf/pennsylvania.pdf>

> **Watch video – “The Weavers”:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfTvj5BmSxU>

Ontario Panel Presentations and Discussions

Presentations and panel discussions involving stakeholders from across the province provided insight into why cycle tourism is growing in Ontario. Participants spoke of regional initiatives and product development for tourists who are discovering new ways for experiencing Ontario.

The Niagara Region, the National Capital Commission and the City of Toronto are building on their significant bicycle route networks and signage programs, enabling an increase in cycle tourists and related programs. The St. Lawrence Parks Commission, Rideau Heritage Route and Butterfield and Robinson have analysed the cycle tourist profile and are gearing marketing and product development towards this lucrative segment. The demographic information shared compares to most international research finding cycle tourists to be more affluent, educated, who travel more and stay longer than an average tourist.

Bill Allen, President of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, moderated the panel “The path ahead: What are the next steps in the business development of cycle tourism in Ontario?” He noted that, while other jurisdictions are ahead of us, we can learn from their successes and challenges in the development of cycle tourism. He posed two questions to the final panel participants, here is an overview of their responses:

1. What are the three key factors to make cycle tourism successful in Ontario?

Burkhard Mausberg, President, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

- Cycling needs to become mainstream; infrastructure, safety and tourism will then follow
- The cycle tourism product needs to be of excellent quality, providing full experiences
- Leadership is needed at the provincial government level through the implementation the Ontario Bike Plan and province-wide infrastructure

Jean-François Pronovost, Executive Director, Vélo Québec Association

- Clear idea and vision of what the industry wants
- Strong, established organization with effective leadership, collaborative partnerships, and priority to serve in the public interest
- Capacity to see the long-term but act in the short-term

Marlaine Koehler, Executive Director, Waterfront Regeneration Trust

- Identify key routes in province, organize signature provincial trips
- Cultivate businesses to support best long distance cycle routes
- Improve inter-modal transportation options for cyclists (VIA, GO, Greyhound)

2. How do we maintain the momentum generated at this event? What should be the next steps?

Marlaine Koehler, Executive Director, Waterfront Regeneration Trust

- Provide leadership and coordination with a small working group with a defined process

Jean-François Pronovost, Executive Director, Vélo Québec Association

- Elect or designate someone or a group to provide provincial leadership
- Write a 5-10 page document to explain clear vision and concrete ideas
- Coordinate a meeting with the Ministry of Transportation to get them on board
- Frequently communicate progress to stakeholders and government
- Designate and promote the first phase of a provincial network

Burkhard Mausberg, President, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

- Get political “buy-in” from key provincial government Ministers (Minister of Tourism, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Health Promotion etc.)
 - Designate a small panel or working group to develop a cycle tourism strategy with clear and focused vision
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Jean-François Pronovost, Burkhard Mausberg and Bill Allen responding to comments from the floor.

Comments from the Floor:

- Important to develop strategy with clear vision so that all stakeholders are working towards the same goals. Need to develop infrastructure, coordination and marketing, then take strategy and run with it.
- Mountain biking is a bigger market than cycle touring in Ontario, trails are cheaper to create and maintain. Don't overlook mountain biking in cycle tourism strategy and planning.
- Creating events (large and small) and experiences are critical to the success of cycle tourism.
- Need leadership and partnerships, there are a lot of organizations working on cycle tourism related programs. As well, an Ontario Trails Strategy already exists.
- There is a lack of cycle tourism infrastructure, which contributes to the perception cycle tourism is not safe.
- Need a provincial "Welcome Cyclist"-type program to raise standards of accommodations and other facilities that cater to cyclists.
- It is important to have multi-modal transportation options accessible across the province.
- Cross-industry partnerships are important (ie. with health units)
- Need municipal governments to get involved, as well as transportation and engineering departments.
- Need make roads safer by changing driver attitude through education. More diversity considered in cycle tourism infrastructure planning.

Developing Partnerships and Networks of Cycle Tourism Leaders

Participants were given several opportunities to network with other tourism leaders from across the province, as well as with international leaders in the field. These partnerships will result the sharing of knowledge and are the first steps towards concrete action. The stakeholders were invigorated by learning what the challenges were in other regions and solutions to overcoming them.

Results from Feedback Form

Eighty-one feedback forms were completed by industry stakeholders out of a total of 160 in attendance. Feedback on the event, line-up of speakers and agenda topics was overwhelmingly positive. The responses also provided insightful feedback on the challenges and next steps on how to develop Ontario as a leading cycle tourism destination in North America. Here is an overview of the results:

The main challenges in the development of cycle tourism in Ontario were identified as:

Lack of infrastructure (routes, trails, signage)	21%
No lead/provincial organization	20%
Lack of government funding and support (municipal, regional, provincial)	17%
Lack of provincial vision/strategic plan	11%
Safety and liability issues	8%
Lack of multi-modal transportation options	8%
Lack of awareness of benefits (social, economical, environmental)	7%
Lack of marketing and promotion	5%
Lack of product development	2%

The next steps that were identified for the development of cycle tourism in Ontario were identified as:

Develop an Ontario Cycle Tourism Strategy	17%
Increase government funding and support	12%
Develop regional and provincial infrastructure	12%
Determine a lead industry organization/association	12%
Secure a political champion	9%
Increase education and awareness of benefits	7%
Expand provincial/OTMP marketing efforts	6%
Unify cycle tourism brand and signage standards	4%
Deal with safety and liability issues	3%
Increase multi-modal transportation options	3%
Develop province-wide mapping and wayfinding	3%
Implement Ontario Bike Plan and active transportation policies	3%
Encourage innovation and product development	3%
Coordinate regular industry forums and events	3%
Cultivate collaborative partnerships	3%
Develop Ontario “Welcome Cyclists” program	1%

The leaders and champions in the development of cycle tourism in Ontario were identified as (*in alphabetical order*):

Bicycle Trade Association of Canada	Ottawa/National Capital Commission
Bike Train Initiative	Parks Canada
City of Toronto	Prince Edward County
Community Cycling Clubs	Private Tour Operators
Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation	Share the Road Coalition
Ministry of Tourism	Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
Municipalities/Regions	Transportation Options
Niagara Region	Waterfront Regeneration Trust
Ontario Trails Council	

Attendee Breakdown

Stakeholder Representation:

29% Municipal/Regional Government
19% Destination Marketing Organization
15% Small to Medium Business
15% Non-Profit Organization
8% Government of Ontario
6% Large Business
6% Other

Geographic Representation:

40% Greater Toronto Area
19% Niagara-Hamilton Area
12% Eastern Ontario
12% Central Ontario
9% Southwestern Ontario
5% Canada and International
3% Northern Ontario

Feedback Highlights

“The best forum I have ever attended.”

“Excellent overall. Great energy, great ideas, lots of inspiration with the international and Quebec examples.”

“I particularly enjoyed the speakers from Quebec & Europe. It was an interesting Forum and there was a palpable excitement & enthusiasm in the room throughout the day! Congratulations on an excellent forum that will hopefully stimulate progress on this topic in Ontario.”

“We have a newly developed product allowing us to position ourselves for the eventuality of programs such as Bike Train & Latitude 45 Nord.”

“We are very eager to start weekend getaway cycling tours that start with coming 'up north' on GO Train. And day trips!”

“While advocacy for active transportation is important and so is urban cycling, need to keep focus on cycling tourism.”

Recommendations for Strategic Priorities:

The positive participation and feedback from over 160 tourism stakeholders in attendance confirms the cycle tourism market is growing in Ontario. The inaugural success of the Greenbelt Foundation's Tour de Greenbelt and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust's Great Waterfront Trail Adventure Tour are encouraging indicators of this emerging market. The Bike Train Initiative has also demonstrated how easy, safe and popular it is for tourists to take their bikes on select VIA Rail departures between Toronto and the Niagara region.

With approximately 80% of all tourists being from within the province, the industry cannot afford to miss out on a lucrative domestic market opportunity. This is especially important when baby boomers are retiring and looking for affordable, rejuvenating ways to spend leisure time.

Based on the presentations, discussion and feedback from the Ontario Cycle Tourism Forum, the recommendations to further develop cycle tourism in Ontario are to:

- 1. Determine a lead working group, organization and/or association to coordinate the cycle tourism strategy development and industry consultation**
- 2. Develop an Ontario Cycle Tourism Strategy**
- 3. Increase government funding to support the development and expansion of regional and provincial cycle tourism infrastructure**

By implementing these recommendations, the Province of Ontario will have a shared and strategic vision to develop the infrastructure and products required in the near and long-term to become a leading cycle tourism destination in North America.

Project Outcome/Results Checklist

- ✓ 4 presenters from world-leading bicycle tourism organizations
 - ✓ A minimum of 100 industry stakeholders to attend the Ontario Cycle Tourism Forum
 - ✓ 3 concrete next steps identified for Ontario bicycle tourism investment and development, and industry "champions" recruited
 - ✓ 5 conference sponsors and partners secured
 - ✓ Final Report and Recommendations with strategic priorities identified
 - ✓ Details of how the Province's support has been acknowledged;
 - ✓ A final un-audited statement with accounts for Project revenue and expenditures, including in-kind goods and services
 - ✓ An indication of whether the objectives of the Project are being / were met;
 - ✓ A description of how the success of the Project is being / was measured; and
 - ✓ A description of the level of community participation and response.
-