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## Now is the time to invest in renewing Canada's outdoor recreation infrastructure

With warmer weather sweeping across much of our country, Canadians are venturing outside and looking for safe ways to spend time with family and friends. Outdoor recreation – be it getting on a boat and fishing, hiking through a provincial park, camping in your RV, or motoring along a wooded trail – is the perfect prescription for a lockdown-weary nation.

As Canadians embrace the outdoors and plan 'staycations', policymakers are looking for ways to give businesses a shot in the arm while investing in projects that will position our country to emerge from this crisis economically stronger and more resilient. This is where we, as members of the Canadian Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (CORR), see a historic window to renew and expand Canada's outdoor recreation economy and the cherished year-round outdoor infrastructure our industry depends on.

Outdoor recreation is a big part of Canada's economy. CORR members represent thousands of businesses that produce vehicles, equipment, gear, apparel and services for the millions of Canadians who enjoy our national parks, waterways, byways, trails and outdoor spaces. The collective outdoor recreation industry is conservatively estimated to produce \$26 billion in economic activity for Canada each year, generating an estimated 472,713 direct jobs, \$7.1 billion in taxes and \$52.1 billion in total revenues.

Making these economic contributions more impressive is the fact that outdoor recreation businesses have been able to not just survive, but thrive, despite the crumbling conditions of the recreation infrastructure our businesses and customers rely on. In addition to jeopardizing the significant economic benefits these public areas provide, Canada's mounting multi-billion-dollar deferred maintenance and repair backlog at national and provincial parks negatively impacts visitor access, enjoyment, and safety on public lands and waters.

From months-long emergency shutdowns to travel restrictions, the outdoor sector has been hit hard by the pandemic. A recent report by Export Development Canada on the impacts of COVID-19 on the Canadian tourism sector found that "more than 40% of businesses in these industries are expecting to see a 50% decline in revenues, the highest proportion amongst all industries." Another sobering statistic: a recent survey of Canada's recreational fishing industry showed that three quarters of respondents had seen a decline in sales ranging from 25% to

75% for April and May compared to the same period in 2019. When asked what they would like to see in addition to short-term financial assistance, many respondents listed 'better access to public waters and more promotion of outdoor recreational activities' as priorities.

Outdoor recreation businesses are often lifelines for their communities, providing jobs and economic stability. However, they rely on trips and travel bringing a steady stream of visitors to our public and private lands and waters. Other factors that our industry relies on – accessibility to recreation assets, adequate recreation infrastructure, and the certainty of manufacturing and trade – have also been interrupted by COVID-19.

As during the 2008-09 financial crisis, governments are currently earmarking billions in infrastructure funding and calling on communities to launch “shovel ready” projects. There are many smaller projects – improving and expanding trails, marinas, campgrounds, and other recreational infrastructure – that could be started quickly and done this fiscal year. The jobs and economic impact of these investments would be a great boon to all regions of Canada, including rural and remote and Indigenous communities. According to the US National Park Service, for example, every dollar invested in the national park system returns \$10 to the U.S. economy from visitor spending.

As Canadians, we have long prided ourselves on the rugged and pristine beauty of our country. Let's seize this chance to jump-start the Canadian workforce and make our great outdoors more accessible and enjoyable for today's and future generations.

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- *Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations (CCSO)*
- *Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council (COHV)*
- *Canadian Camping and RV Council (CCRVC)*
- *Canadian Recreational Vehicle Association (CRVA)*
- *Canadian Shooting Sports Association (CSSA)*
- *Canadian Ski Council*
- *Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association (CSIA) & Canadian National Sportfishing Foundation (CNSF)*
- *Fur Institute of Canada*
- *International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA)*
- *Motorcycle & Moped Industry Council (MMIC)*
- *National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) Canada*
- *Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association (RVDA)*
- *Safari Club International*