



NEWS RELEASE

A Master Plan for the Sentier de l'Étoile

(Memramcook: June 2, 2009) – The Master Plan for the Sentier de l'Étoile, a project to build and link 400 km of trails along New Brunswick's Acadian coastline, from Memramcook to Caraquet, was unveiled this morning at the Monument Lefebvre, one of the departure points for this ambitious proposal. The research and consultation work for the Master Plan took place during a one-year period. The project aims to achieve a longstanding dream to build, along the province's eastern shoreline, trails to bring people and communities closer together.

“The idea of a walking and cycling trail running along the Acadian coast received remarkable support among the people consulted during the preparation of the feasibility study in 2008,” noted Daniel LeBlanc, co-president of the committee. “Many of the stakeholders consulted perceive the project as providing a unique opportunity to develop a new major tourism attraction in New Brunswick, at low cost, while also generating positive impacts for the many communities and businesses along the trail route,” he added.

The Sentier de l'Étoile features three main themes: history and culture; nature and eco-tourism; and religious and spiritual discovery. L'Acadie has a rich history and culture and the Sentier de l'Étoile will highlight some of its key heritage sites. The trail will also attract the attention of hikers and cyclists to the Acadian Forest, its natural habitat, its flora and fauna. Finally, the Sentier de l'Étoile will offer an opportunity for some to live a spiritual experience through the discovery of the religious heritage sites of the Acadian, Mi'kmaq, Irish and Anglican.

A preliminary market analysis conducted under the auspices of the Master Plan has revealed evidence of direct spin-off benefits potentially exceeding \$18 million over five years due to the presence of the Sentier de l'Étoile. According to the most likely scenario, it is estimated that the Sentier de l'Étoile will attract more than 85,000 visitors annually within five years. The majority of these visitors will travel a portion of the trail, while a number of them will hike or cycle the entire trail.

The cost of the Sentier de l'Étoile project, estimated at \$13.7 million, is to be considered from several angles, according to the promoters of the project. “First and foremost, it involves investments in a basic transportation infrastructure, enabling local residents to travel by foot or bicycle within their communities,” explains Daniel LeBlanc. “Added to this is the impact of the trail in terms of people's health and environmental protection,” he concluded.