

End to End Hike Diary: Hike 1

Every hike starts with that first step. Saturday, April 30th was the morning that 18 hikers took that first step towards Kingston. They set off on the first hike of the season to cover the 300 kms between Ottawa and Kingston along the Rideau Trail. Hikers will hike segments of the Rideau Trail each weekend over the spring, summer and fall. A diary of the hikes will be published here each week. Follow along with us and maybe even join us for some of the segments.

The weather was very rainy and cool on April 30th, the day of the kick-off of the 2005 End-to-End hiking program, but the enthusiasm and warmth of the hikers prevailed! The hikers gathered at Richmond Landing, Ottawa, and prepared to walk the first 14 kms along the Ottawa River to Corkstown Road & Moodie Drive.

Several past Presidents of the Rideau Trail Association (Peter Hawkins in the role of photographer, Ron Maybury, Nanette Whitwam and Bill Grant) were also in attendance. Find out more about the Rideau Trail by visiting the web site at www.rideautrail.org.



Janet Stavinga, City of Ottawa Councillor for Goulbourn was on hand to represent the City. Janet read the text of a letter of greeting from Mayor Bob Chiarelli to Harvey Rosen, the Mayor of Kingston. She then presented the letter to Nicole Florent, Chair of the Kingston Club of the Rideau Trail. Here is an excerpt from Mayor Chiarelli's letter:

"Although it is undoubtedly the Canal which forms the most historic connection between us, there is another link, although not so well known. I am referring to the Rideau Trail which was established in 1971 and is maintained by the Rideau Trail Association. We can imagine people have been travelling this route (or close to it) since the early days, bridging our two communities.

"In recognition of Ottawa's 150th birthday as a city, the Rideau Trail Association is organizing an "end-to-end" hike starting from Ottawa and following the whole Trail through Smiths Falls and Perth en route to Kingston - a distance of some 300 kilometres.

"I am pleased to have the Rideau Trail end-to-end hikers present to you, a letter of greeting from me as Mayor of the City of Ottawa."

Similar letters have been written to the Mayors of Smiths Falls and Perth. The hikers will present the letters to the Mayors as they pass through their communities.

Ms. Stavinga reminded us to think of the settlers who landed at the site of the Rideau Trail trailhead (Richmond Landing) when we pass through the Village of Richmond later in the End-to-End program. Janet enjoys the outdoors and hiking and is Vice President of the Rideau Conservation Authority.

Ron Hunt, Chair of the Ottawa Rideau Trail Club who presided at the kick-off, then read a message from Todd Bardes, President of Hike Ontario. Todd wrote:

"I know that you will find the Trail from Ottawa to Kingston to be a good challenge and a most enjoyable venue to see much of the history and landscape of Ontario.

"Hike Ontario offers a long-distance badge for any hiker that completes two major trails of 150 km or more. Today you are embarking on the Rideau Trail and we encourage you to explore the many trails and paths in this great Province.

"I wish you strong legs, clear sky, happy feet and good times."



After a rousing countdown, the hikers broke through the Rideau Trail banner and started on their way, bundled against the elements but warm in spirit. The rain grew more persistent as the day wore on, testing the patience and the mettle (not to mention the clothing and footwear) of all of those on the inaugural hike. As always, the hikers pressed onward.

