

## Bancroft council supports Eagle's Nest trail and parking expansion

By Kaitlin Sylvester

The Stewards of Bancroft Eagle's Nest Park are planning to expand the Eagles Nest Park trail system. On Feb. 14 the Bancroft council approved a request for support that included access to nearby crown land and \$50,000 as an in-kind contribution. The Jan. 24 request from the SBENP's is the first step in applying for the Tourism Growth Program program, due Feb. 29. The key elements of their proposal include sustainability, community engagement, and the potential for economic growth. The first part of the draft request focuses on utilizing crown lands to the east of the existing park for a proposed trail of approximately 2.5 kilometres. This extension should align with the existing Eagles Nest Park trail system, creating a cohesive and sustainable addition to this popular spot. SBENP has worked in collaboration with relevant authorities, including consultations with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Algonquins of Ontario. Dave Naulls of the SBENP's has reviewed the roll numbers with Robin Tait at the Bancroft town office to ensure the accuracy of the property lines. The group is also working with Nick January at the County of Hastings to establish real-time property boundaries. This thoughtful approach aims to create a trail that complements the natural surroundings and respects property boundaries while ensuring minimal environmental impact. Jake Krupa has provided a cost estimate of \$95,653.80 (including contingency costs) for the expanded parking and new parking area. The new 10-vehicle parking area would be off Snow Road near the water treatment plant. The SBENP's suggest this new "back entrance to the park will improve accessibility and year-round access for recreational activities like snowshoeing. By adding the new trail section to the existing Memorandum of Understanding with the town, SBENP plans to solidify their commitment to maintaining a strong partnership in maintaining Eagles Nest Park. This inclusivity extends to the continued provision of municipal insurance for the additional trail, with SBENP promising to integrate it into their existing policy. The Tourism Growth Program application is due Feb 29. Once the application has been submitted budgets and further planning will begin in earnest for the park expansion. The application includes a letter specifying the town's in-kind contribution, approval for land use, and updated parking plans. The collaborative nature of the grant application underscores the nature of this initiative, "to strengthen our local economy and provide new healthy outdoor recreational opportunities for our residents and visitors." The proposed expansion of Bancroft Eagles Nest Park not only creates new trails for the region's outdoor enthusiasts, but signifies a commitment to sustainable development, community collaboration, and economic growth. The SBENP's are positioning themselves as guardians of natural beauty while envisioning a future where residents and visitors alike can enjoy the great outdoors. The decisions made in the coming weeks will shape the legacy of Bancroft Eagles Nest Park for generations to come.