



Ride the Trail for Elizabeth campaign arriving in Cranbrook

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63-year-old woman cyclist killed – husband rides across Canada – petitions B.C. government for safe cycling trails

An Edmonton, Alberta man whose wife, Elizabeth Sovis, was killed last July in a horrific cycling accident has launched a petition calling on the B.C. government to keep its promise to build the Trans Canada Trail.

He is asking for an Action Plan to ensure the Trail's BC section is completed – as promised – by July 1, 2017, in time for Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations. And he wants immediate action on those parts of the Trail that lie on dangerous highways near Malahat, Nanaimo River, Coquihalla Canyon, Summerland, Cranbrook, Fernie and Sparwood.

Edmund Auger's wife was killed on Prince Edward Island, on the first day of their planned cycling holiday in that province, but he says that the accident could have occurred just as easily in British Columbia.

"We did most of our cycling in B.C. My wife was extremely safety conscious and, whenever possible, refused to ride in the same lane as motor vehicles. That's why we always travelled on the Trans Canada Trail," Auger said.

“Unfortunately, there are many impassable and incomplete sections, and we were frequently forced to leave the greenway and ride on some very scary roads and highways.

“In 2005, for example, when we were cycling on Vancouver Island – and diligently following the official BC Trail guide – we suddenly found ourselves pedaling down a treacherous section of the Malahat Highway. It was an utterly terrifying experience, trying to dodge the road debris, with a rock cliff on our right and high-speed traffic on our left.

“After a few similar experiences in subsequent years, Elizabeth decided that she would spend her retirement years promoting the Trans Canada Trail. She wanted to see it finished, but she also wanted it to be accessible and passable and safe. A trail that could be used safely by everyone, regardless of their age or ability,” Aunger said, adding, “Elizabeth worked as speech-language pathologist and she planned to take her retirement on July 1, 2013. I am taking up her cause.

“I will be cycling the Trans Canada Trail from Victoria to Charlottetown, in five stages, beginning in July 2013 and finishing in July 2017. I hope to promote the Trail by increasing awareness, rallying support and raising funds.

“I kicked off my ride in Victoria on Canada Day by reading my petition at the BC Legislature to about 30 supporters, mainly family and friends. Since that time, more than 600 people have signed the petition, and I hope that these numbers will increase dramatically as I cross the province,” he said.

On Friday, August 2, at 9 a.m., he will be at Cranbrook’s Trans Canada Trail Pavilion in Baker Park, where he will give a short talk about the trail, his petition and cross-Canada journey. Afterwards, he will continue his ride along the Crowsnest Highway to Kikomun Creek Provincial Park.

“Since the Trans Canada Trail is relatively undeveloped in the Kootenays, this is a particularly dangerous section of my cross-Canada trip.”

Detailed Information on the Ride the Trail for Elizabeth campaign is posted at www.ridethetrail.ca.