

• **Man takes up cause of cycling Trans Canada Trail**

By Murray Crawford - Red Deer Advocate

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Last year Edmund Aunger's wife died in a collision while the Edmonton couple was bike riding in Prince Edward Island.

Elizabeth Sovis had recently retired and, as an avid cyclist, had wanted to work towards helping the completion of the Trans Canada Trail.

The two had just started a holiday on P.E.I. when they had to bike four kilometres on a highway to get to their bed and breakfast, something Sovis would never have attempted under normal circumstances.

"There was a route marked on our cycling guide that was for cyclists," said Aunger.

"It turned out to be a two-laned highway with no shoulders. Something my wife never would have cycled on. We wouldn't have even gone to P.E.I. if she had known she'd have to cycle on the highway."

The couple got 2.5 kms in to the four km stretch when she was hit by a van and killed.

Aunger said they chose P.E.I. because it supposedly had the best, safest and most complete network of Trans Canada Trail in the country.

Upon retirement Sovis decided she would spend the first few years of her retirement getting the Trans Canada Trail built, specifically in Alberta.

"I quit my job shortly afterwards and decided I would try to work to get the Trans Canada Trail finished," said Aunger.

Aunger plans to fulfill his wife's goal of supporting the completion of the trail by cycling from Victoria to Charlottetown over the next four years.

This year he has cycled from Victoria to Red Deer, but plans to finish up in his hometown of Edmonton within a week.

"Every summer when we did our cycling I made the plans and tried to keep to trails," said Aunger.

"So we wouldn't have to go on the roads and it was a problem. Alberta and Saskatchewan are the two worst provinces in Canada for building the Trans Canada Trail."

He said while provincial governments like Alberta and Saskatchewan haven't stepped up and fulfilled their end of the bargain in completing the trail, while municipalities like Red Deer, Calgary or Edmonton do a great job of having their own trails.

Because of the municipal-centricity of trail development Aunger has found he has to crisscross his way through Alberta to ride Trans Canada Trails.

After cycling from Blackfalds to Lacombe he has to go out to Pigeon Lake for the next stretch, and then to the other side of Hwy. 2 to Wetaskiwin for the next section of the Trans Canada Trail.

"We tried to ride in Alberta and it was very frustrating because we would get started on a trail and it would end and we'd have to go out on the highway and pick up the trail somewhere else and then go back on the highway," said Aunger.

Sovis felt strongly about riding in Alberta, but due to the frustration they mostly rode in Quebec, B.C. and Manitoba, where Aunger said the trails were better and actually connected.

He wants an action plan to ensure the completion of Alberta's part of the Trans Canada Trail, as promised, by July 1, 2017.

The original goal of the Trans Canada Trail was to be completed by Canada's 150th birthday.

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